

One Fold

Reader's Digest Mormonism

Christianity Today quotes a *Reader's Digest* source as reporting that the twelve-page insert "7 Keys to Mormonism" in its April issue cost the Church more than \$650,000. Estimated readership was 17 million Americans and 1.5 million Germans. Three more eight-page inserts are projected at a cost of \$1.5 million.

Church PR director Jerry Cahill told *Christianity Today* that the Church's December 1978 *Reader's Digest* insert resulted in 10,000 requests for the free booklet on "family solidarity" it described. "So far," says *Christianity Today*, "the *Digest* reports little reader reaction to the Mormons' advertising splash. 'There have been a few letters from people who didn't agree with Mormonism,' said a spokesperson, 'but then you would expect that for any religious group that took out an ad.'" The 1979 inserts deal more directly with distinctive Mormon doctrines than previous ads.

School Prayer Measure Fails

In April, Senator Jesse Helms (R-SC) surprised nearly everyone by getting an amendment permitting voluntary prayer in public schools tacked on to a liberal-backed bill creating a Cabinet-level department of education. The Helms amendment prohibited federal courts from intervening if state courts approved public school prayers.

Helms pointed out that the Senate begins each session with prayer, but that privilege is denied American school children. Edward Kennedy joined the fray on the Senate floor, charging the amendment was unconstitutional and would be the first attempt by Congress to exclude federal courts from issues of "individual rights and liberties enshrined in the Constitution." President Carter agrees with the 1962 and 1963 Supreme Court rulings banning the prayers because "it might be very embarrassing to a young person to say, 'I want to be excused from the room because I don't want to pray.'" Government "ought to stay out of the prayer business," he said, for prayer "ought to be an individual matter between a person and God."

Rebel Archbishop

French Roman Catholic Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, suspended by Pope Paul VI in 1976 for continuing to celebrate the mass in Latin, has announced he will ordain thirty-one more priests in 1979, in defiance of his suspension. Lefebvre has met with Pope John Paul II to urge a relaxation on the ban of Latin masses, but apparently failed to achieve reconciliation.

CELAM Election

In the aftermath of the recent Conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops (CELAM), Archbishop Alfonso Lopez Trujillo of Medellin, Columbia, has been elected

president of the organization. Trujillo, who was secretary general of the conference, was described by the *National Catholic Reporter* as a "two-faced minion of reaction." It was a close election, with Trujillo capturing most conservative votes while moderates and progressives split between two rivals. Trujillo's election, coupled with John Paul II's denunciation of direct religious involvement in politics is a set-back for "liberation theology" in Latin America.

Religion and National Decisions

In its annual survey of American decision-makers, *U.S. News & World Report*, discovered that religion ranked 26th of 29 institutions affecting national decisions. Religion came just ahead of the Republican Party, small business, and cinema.

Ecumenical Baptism Statement

Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Theologians have achieved "an important breakthrough" by agreeing that "believers' baptism" is the most common baptismal rite referred to in the New Testament. According to *The Christian Century*, 33 theologians participated in a four-day conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches to produce the report. Baptists, who, like Mormons, believe in baptism only for individuals capable of understanding and believing basic Christian doctrines were pleased with the consensus, although representatives from churches practicing infant baptism (Roman Catholic, Orthodox,

etc.), noted that the report also accepted infant baptism as valid and rejected "rebaptism."

Priest Shortage

According to the *New York Times*, 3,000 Roman Catholic priests apply for lay status every year. Paul VI had relaxed policy and thousands of priests were released from their vows. As a result, says the *National Catholic Reporter*, the number of American priests dropped from 59,000 in 1966 to 51,000 in 1977. Enrollment in seminary has dropped from 46,000 to 16,800 and Roman Catholicism may be faced with a critical shortage of priests in the near future. Pope John Paul II recently charged priests not to be released from their celibacy vows.

Billy Graham Drops the Bomb

The April 30 edition of *Christianity & Crisis* carries a transcript of "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite" telecast March 29. In an interview with Jed Duvall, Billy Graham, who in 1965 was a strong supporter of the Nixon-Johnson arms buildup, backs away from his previous hawkish stance: "I think there's a vast change taking place in that (evangelical) community. I don't think they were aware of the potential horror of what a nuclear war with present weapons could do to the human race. And I think that they're awakening to the fact that they have a responsibility to speak out. . . . I'm in favor of disarmament and I'm in favor of trust. I'm in favor of having agreements not only to reduce but to eliminate. Why should any nation have atomic bombs? . . . As I look back, I think Mr. Truman made a mistake in dropping that first atomic bomb. I wish we had never developed it."

There are an estimated 40 to 50 million evangelical Christians in the United States. This surprising reversal on the part of their most prominent spokesman will no doubt be glad tidings to SALT II proponents.



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