

RELIGION ● WATCH

A Monthly Digest of Trends and Ideas in Religion

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A CHARISMATIC DECADE

To many observers the charismatic movement lost its momentum during the late 1970's, but a glimpse of the thick — 178 pages — 10th anniversary issue of *Charisma* magazine (August) might lead one to believe that the movement is alive and well.

The editors of the magazine asked charismatic leaders to report on "decatrends" — developments that have emerged in the movement during the last ten years. Don't expect critical or unbiased analysis from these writers, but rather an insider's view of the continued growth of the charismatics. Here are some of the reported trends:

- Following the independent and Southern Baptists, the Charismatic churches are in "the third wave of the super-church trend," according to church growth specialist Carl F. George. Some charismatic churches have broken through the super-church category and are now called "mega-churches" (while super-churches have over 1,000 active members, mega-churches have over 10,000). One reason which George cites for the appearance of charismatic super- and mega-churches is that "charismatics have a theology for coping with the supernatural in the present world, while older denominations see miracles as occurring in Bible times." Another reason is that charismatics stress leadership that often carries "apostolic authority," which seems to draw the crowds. Some of the statistics cited for charismatic churches are noteworthy, especially in other countries. Calvary Chapel in California has 12,500 members, while the Full Gospel Central Church in Korea claims 400,000 members and the Jotabeche Pentecostal Methodist Church in Chile has 100,000.
- Charismatic historian Vinson Synan sees evidence pointing to the possibility that 50 percent of the world's Christians may eventually be of the Pentecostal or charismatic variety and located in the Southern Hemisphere.
- During the mid-70's many charismatics were predicting that the movement would usher in unity among the churches. But today, charismatic Catholic writer, Nick Cavar, thinks the impetus toward unity has stalled. The ecumenical enthusiasm reached its peak at the major charismatic conference in 1977 in Kansas City. But soon after, "all sides retreated back into a greater concentration with their own traditions." Charismatic Catholics were accused of exclusivity by Protestants, because they began to stress their own identity and discourage "indiscriminate ecumenism." Despite the current fragmentation among charismatics, with no strong interdenominational leadership coming from any direction, Cavar reports that a "mature unity" is developing that doesn't "paper over the difficult issues." To renew the dreams of the Kansas City conference, a large ecumenical gathering is planned for 1987.
- The last decade has also witnessed the growth of the "faith movement" among charismatics. The movement teaches that divine healing is a benefit of Christ's atonement and that

"redemption from poverty is part of the blessings that God intended," according to Kenneth Hagen Jr. Rhema Ministries, which Hagen and his father, Kenneth Hagen Sr., direct, has been the primary agent spreading faith teachings world-wide.

- Church historian Richard Lovelace notes that classical Pentecostals and charismatics, unlike the Pentecostals of earlier times, have entered into scholarship and interaction in the wider church and in mainline and evangelical seminaries. Lovelace writes that new alliances have emerged out of such contact. There is less hostility and distance between non-charismatic evangelicals and charismatics than in the past as they join "in a common cause against more liberal segments of church and society." Lovelace manages to pick out some new types of charismatics also, such as "restorationist charismatics" (biblical purists, who form "New Testament Churches"), house church charismatics, who discard traditional church structures altogether, and charismatic messianic Jewish "synagogues".

- Long-time trend-watcher Jamie Buckingham looks at the charismatic future and forecasts an increasing emphasis on "signs and wonders" (miracles) among evangelicals, especially Southern Baptists. New leaders are also emerging, writes Buckingham, especially in New England and the Pacific Northwest, "where there is a mighty explosion of the Holy Spirit taking place." The concept of "apostles" and an "apostolic" ministries will also be widely adopted in leadership circles. Buckingham thinks the Catholics will withdraw even further into their own tradition, "...shunning true ecumenicity." He concludes that as the third generation of charismatics — "who are devoid of experience" — come to power, there will be an emphasis on "legalistic doctrine" and institutionalism.

LITERARY CATHOLICS IN THE LIMELIGHT

While evangelicals and fundamentalists may have captured the television and radio waves for spreading their message, Catholics can increasingly be found today on the nearest shelf of paperback best-sellers, according to an article in the *New Catholic World* (July-Aug.).

Pope John Paul II, liberation theology, and the ongoing abortion debate have all contributed to the recent visibility of Roman Catholics. But perhaps nothing has brought Catholics before the public as much as novels by Andrew Greeley, Mary Gordon and a growing number of other Catholic novelists, writes William O'Rourke. While the number of Catholic writers is still small their Catholic readership is vast. O'Rourke cites statistics showing that Catholics now make up the highest percentage of first time students in U.S. colleges. "The baby boomers are now reading about themselves, writes O'Rourke, "and a disproportionate share of that boom happened to be raised Catholic."

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There is also a new kind of Catholic writer today. Where once nuns and priests were only the characters in novels, today most of the writers are former or current members of religious orders, such as Greely, Eugene Kennedy and James Carroll. Most, though not all, of these novels are in the romantic vein and are inspired more from soap operas rather than other literature, according to O'Rourke. The appeal of such books, writes O'Rourke, is that their characters, usually priests and nuns, "resurrect the classical forms of hero and anti-hero. They possess qualities and attributes that can be tested against a standard."

O'Rourke notes that Catholics in print have achieved a higher status in society than the electronic evangelists. "In the past, before Catholics parents sent a couple of generations of sons and daughters to college, Catholics were pleased to settle for T.V. But the trashiest best selling novel is still somehow more respectable in educated circles than the 'PTL Club'."

In Japan, on the other hand, Christian literature seems to have gained a more privileged place. In the June issue of *One World*, a magazine of the World Council of Churches, the editors report that while Christians in Japan are an estimated one percent of the country's 100 million people, they make up for it with their high representation in literary circles, especially since World War II.

In pre-war times, Christian writers tended to conceal their faith, often only to be revealed in deathbed requests for a Christian funeral. Shuman Miura, the new director general of Japan's Cultural Affairs Agency (who is a Catholic novelist himself), observes that most Japanese literature tended to use Christianity as a "symbol of modernity... A kind of intellectual ornament, like a character's knowledge of Greek philosophy." So it appears that as the forces of modernity increased in Japan after the war, Christianity has become more respectable, at least in literary circles. One Japanese Catholic novelist catching the attention of U.S., readers is Shusaku Endo, whose use of Catholic themes have often been compared to English author Graham Greene.

CULT UPDATE

Although there has been less news coverage of cults recently, they have not decreased in number or in influence, according to a survey of "cult-watchers" in *Christianity Today* magazine (Aug. 9). Of the 14 specialists surveyed none found the trend toward "cultic aberrations" diminishing, and 10 said it is growing.

The observers in *Christianity Today*, mostly evangelicals, view the cults as anything but harmless. The Mormons were called the most dangerous cult of the pre-1960 category, followed by the Jehovah's Witnesses. They are dangerous, one respondent says, because "they are established, promote moral values and family unity and appear to be [just another Christian denomination]".

Of the post-'60 groups the Unification Church, The Way International and Rajneeshpuram were viewed to be the most threatening. Other cultic developments spotted were:

- Sheparding (a movement stressing strong leadership in charismatic circles), deliverance/healing/prophecy/groups and extremist fundamentalist sects are growing.

- Increasing interest in issues of the "New Age" movement, and a growing polarity between evangelical and new-conciousness, New Age groups.

HOME SCHOOLING FOR FUNDAMENTALISTS

An increasing number of parents are deciding to educate their children at home rather than in schools. There is an estimated 250,000 to 3 million students involved in home schooling, and it appears that fundamentalists are taking an increasing part in the movement. In the September issue of *Fundamentalist Journal*, writer Ann Wharton reports that "many are dissatisfied with the educational preparation offered, the values being taught, and the peer influence applied in the classroom — sometimes in Christian as well as public schools."

Christian schools are no longer seen as the "great hope" for educational ills, according to the parents interviewed in two articles on the subject. One couple began to consider home schooling when they saw that their son's textbook was promoting evolution. But the matter goes somewhat deeper than the parents' dissatisfaction with present-day schools. Most of the parents interviewed now believe that the Bible lays the responsibility of educating children on the parents, not the schools. "God gave her to me, and I was giving that responsibility to others," said one mother who withdraw her daughter from a Christian school to instruct her at home.

The home schooling movement has become so large in fundamentalist circles that several Christian publishing houses now market home teaching materials for parents.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICISM TURNING OUT FEMINISTS

Rather than repudiating their Roman Catholic backgrounds, many Australian women see the church as a kind of finishing school for feminism, according to an article in the *National Catholic Register* (Aug. 18).

Writer Karl G. Schmude cites a phenomenon in Australia called the "lapsed Catholic Mafia". Recent generations of Catholics have moved into mainstream Australian society and into positions of leadership in secular movements, such as feminism. Many feminists give the Catholic Church — especially the Catholic school system — credit for "nurturing the aspirations and abilities of Catholic feminists," according to Schmude. Well-known feminist Germaine Greer is one example of such an upbringing, and national feminist political leader, Susan Ryan, attributes the large proportion of feminists who are Catholic to their parochial school backgrounds.

Among some of the contributions Ryan has cited is the spirit of asceticism and independence that parochial school instilled into girl students. The schools emphasis on "good works" such as working with the disadvantaged, as well as the "anti-establishment sentiments" of the Irish nuns, giving the students a "revolutionary streak" also added to the making of feminists, according to Ryan. Schmude suggests that the Australian feminist movement appears to be replacing traditional Catholic orders for women. "The plight of Catholics may no longer be able to inspire a sense of vocation — but the plight of women appears capable of doing so."

SECOND COMING STILL VALUED BY KOREAN CHRISTIANS

Call it East-West differences, but a recent report on Korean beliefs is likely to puzzle Western Christians. The Study, which first appeared in *Korea Newsreview* and cited in *Faith for the Family* (July-Aug.) shows that while Christians have "assumed a more progressive attitude in their construction of orthodox doctrine...", some traditional beliefs, such as the return of Christ, have greater staying power than others.

Only 35 percent of the laypeople and 22.7 percent of the church leaders professed faith in the divinity of Christ. 30 percent of laypeople and 17.4 percent of leaders are "oriented toward God's kingdom in the future life," according to the survey, which was conducted jointly by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development and Korea University. About half of both the church members and leaders believe in the remission of sins for salvation. In strange contrast, 95 percent of laypeople and 90 percent of clergy believe in the second coming of Christ. Also an "overwhelming majority" of both groups show "absolute support" for the doctrine of the virgin birth.

For some reason best left to sociologists of religion to uncover, the virgin birth and the second coming of Christ are very popular doctrines in Korea. It could be noted, however, that messianic movements — which either stress the return of Christ or some other appointed messiah — have been prominent in Korean church history — the Unification Church being a newsworthy example.

AN INDIAN RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

American Indian religious spirituality is usually spoken of in the past tense — as an interesting cultural artifact. But according to a *Religious News Service* report by Bill Kenkelen (July 15), native American religion is experiencing an unprecedented revival.

A key Indian belief is that the land and many animals — especially the bald eagle — are sacred. Indians are now becoming more assertive, writes Kenkelen, because they feel the "white man" has threatened nature with his involvement with the nuclear arms race and other forms of technology. An increasing interest in native religion is also evident in Indians in countries throughout the Western Hemisphere, such as in Peru and Bolivia.

Joseph Epes Brown, a University of Montana professor studying the subject, thinks that the reason for the upsurge may be because "Indians, though trying to sincerely intergrate into the white man's world, have found it to be a world of diminishing returns. They see emptiness in it." Brown added that "the nuclear arms race serves as the greatest symbol of the white society's corruption." One prominent leader of the Hopi Indian tribe, Thomas Banyaka, is reported to have taken to the road as he visits U.S. Indian communities "repeating Hopi Prophecies that the end of white civilization is near."

Publications Cited In This Issue

British Weekly and Christian Record
11 Carteret Street
London, SW1H 9DJ England

Charisma
190 N. Westmonte Drive
Altamonte Springs, FL 32714

China and the Church Today
P.O. Box 312, Shatin Central P.O.
Shatin N.T. Hong Kong

Christianity and Crisis
537 W. 121 St.
New York, NY 10027

Christianity Today
465 Gunderson Drive
Carol Stream, IL 60187

Christian Century
407 S. Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL 60605

Faith for the Family
Bob Jones University
Greenville, SC 29614

Fundamentalist Journal
Lynchburg, VA 24514

National Catholic Register
6404 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 900
Los Angeles, CA 90048

National Catholic Reporter
P.O. Box 281
Kansas City, MO 64141

New Catholic World
1865 Broadway
New York, NY 10023

One World
150 route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Our Network
1459 Hamilton Ave.
Palto Alto, CA 94301

Religious News Service
104 W. 56th St.
New York, NY 10019

The Round Table
JAF Box 7398
New York, NY 10116

* PASSING IT ON...

Items Of Interest To Readers

- The article on Catholics in literature which was cited from the *New Catholic World* is part of an issue devoted to religion and literature. The other articles deal with such novelists as Flannery O'Connor, Umberto Eco, John Cheever, Saul Bellow and Andrew Greeley.
- The May-June issue of the *Theological Student's Fellowship Bulletin* has published a thorough bibliographic essay on a decade (1973-82) of published literature on the Pentecostal-charismatic movement (both scholarly and popular). For more ordering information send to: TSF Bulletin, 233 Langdon Street, Madison, WI 53704.
- Churches providing sanctuary to illegal immigrants from Central America has become one of the major religion news stories of the year. The July issue of the *Newsletter on Church and State Abroad* provides some helpful background information on the sanctuary issue, and features a debate between Alan C. Nelson, commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and William Sloan Coffin, one of the leaders of the movement. For a copy send to: 170 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10021.
- Catalyst* is a journal attempting to draw together Jewish and Christian scholarship in examining social and religious questions of the day. Among the subjects covered in a recent issue are the evangelical-Jewish alliance, the Aryan Church movement, and Jewish Orthodoxy and social activism. For subscription information or a sample copy write to: P.O. Box 24152, Denver, CO 80222.

□ Bible Review is a new quarterly magazine that, as its name implies, deals with anything biblical. The magazine is designed for a popular audience and features full color illustrations. Articles in a recent issue range from a report on recent Dead Sea Scroll research to new interpretations of scripture. The subscription cost is \$15.00 Send to: 3000 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 300, Washington D.C. 20008.

□ A good way to keep informed of news in religion is to subscribe to the *National Christian Reporter*. NCR comes weekly in four big pages and mostly carries articles from Religious News Service. A Subscription is \$14 a year. Send to: P.O. Box 22198, Dallas, TX 75222.

SHIFT IN NICARAGUAN RELIGION

Francis Houtart, a Belgian sociologist of religion, who has studied Catholicism in various social contexts around the world, has recently taken a look at how Catholicism in Nicaragua has been affected by the changes there. In an interview first published in Nicaragua and reprinted in the July 22 issue of *Christianity and Crisis* he said that the Sandinista revolution has rendered a crisis to the church similar to the scientific revolution during the Renaissance.

Among the rural peasantry, who make up the majority of the population Houtart found that the "old type" of religiosity (ie, traditional Catholicism) is disappearing, with a "new and intense religiosity taking its place" that is more supportive of the revolution. Houtart is speaking about what liberation theologians call the "people's church" which usually organizes itself in "base communities", sometimes in conflict with the official church. There has been some debate about whether the people's church represents a minority or majority of Catholics. But Houtart seems to think that church hierarchy is outnumbered as it prevents the "massive diffusion of the new models, holding in its hand the majority of the institutional channels of religious representation. In addition it locks itself into old models totally inadequate to the new situation."

The sociologist notes that religious faith among the middle class has increased and is finding its expression in the charismatic movement — a phenomenon Houtart observes as evident in "bourgeois" classes that are in social decline, as in Nicaragua.

Replying to the Vatican's criticism that the Sandinista state may be imposing its own brand of secular religion over the church, Houtart agrees that the church as an institution is no longer the only one which "produces meaning and direction for the popular masses. The Sandinista front also produces meaning — I would not say an antagonistic meaning but indeed a meaning that breaks the monopoly of the church."

CATHOLIC DROPOUTS

In the face of a steady number of Catholics leaving the church, there has been some serious research to determine the reason for the high dropout rate, as well as non-traditional methods used in order to draw them back into the fold. Writing in the July 14th issue of the *National Catholic Register*, Joanne Griesbach reports that 25 percent of all dropouts leave for reasons having to do with marriage, such as divorce, separation, dissent over birth control and inter-faith marriages.

But there are other reasons for leaving. Although exact statistics weren't available, Griesbach writes that the trend of Catholics "lost to fundamentalism is alarming." Many who leave for other churches complained that the church was "cold", and the rituals had no meaning. An estimated 15 percent of Hispanics have made the move from the Catholic Church into "fundamentalism" — often Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Catholics have also adopted "funda-

mentalist-like" approaches to win back stray members, according to Griesbach. Evangelism has been emphasized with members of some parishes going door-to-door to reach the inactive.

DEPARTURES AND NEW ALLIANCE FOR ENGLAND'S ANGLO-CATHOLICS

The hierarchy of the Church of England is becoming alarmed over the recent trend of Anglo-Catholics leaving the church to become Roman Catholics. In the August 16th issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, writer Peter Hebblethwaite reports that the Bishop of Chichester recently advised members of an Anglo-Catholic group — from which 26 members had left since last November for the Catholic Church — not to panic because of the "bout of 'Roman fever' running through the Church of England." One of the reasons for the current departures, according to Hebblethwaite, is because of the near acceptance by church leaders of women's ordination, which Anglo-Catholics strongly reject. And the situation may get worse due to the church's decision this summer to ordain women deacons.

While some Anglo-Catholics are leaving the church, evangelical Anglicans are "staying put", says the *British Weekly and Christian Record* newspaper. According to one evangelical leader, "If anything the move is the other way. Evangelical clergyman who left in the early 1970's are coming back." Many had left for independent churches and the "house church" movement but returned when they saw the possibility of an evangelical renewal within the church. But many evangelicals are also watching such developments as women's ordination before they commit themselves to a long stay in the Church of England.

The issue of women's ordination is threatening enough to break some old hostilities also. *Religious News Service* reported that "a new and strange alliance" between Anglo-Catholics and conservative evangelicals is taking place in order to prevent the ordination of women called the Association for an Apostolic Ministry. Low church evangelicals and high church Anglo-Catholics had been long separated from each other on the nature of the church and the sacraments, but now it appears that the "liberal" elements in the church are considered much more dangerous by the two groups than their own differences in belief.

AUSTRALIA'S PRESTIGIOUS CHURCH LEADERS

According to an article in *One World* magazine (Aug.-Sept.), many secular Australians have a high regard for religious professionals. So high, in fact, that church leaders were ranked by many to be just below judges in occupational prestige, says a recent study.

The study, carried out by sociologist Ann Daniel, also found that as clergy climb to higher ranks, so does their popularity. But not all of the Australian public view clergy in the same way. While people in rural areas, clerical workers, and the retired gave church leaders a high rating, manual workers gave them the lowest score.

One Melbourne business trends forecaster has suggested that a doubling of religious careers will take place in Australia in the last quarter of the 20th century. And why all the prestige for clergy? Sociologist Daniel says that "people also have prestige if they control 'esoteric knowledge' or have authority over an important organization. Not only do church leaders appear to control their own working lives; they also guard some of the community's mysteries."

UNIFICATIONISTS IN DISSENT

"We the founders of this publication, count ourselves among the fed up in the Unification Church. Fed up with the leadership that has run us aground. Leaders who treat 30-year-olds like they are infant children. Leaders who see disobedience as the Number One cardinal sin and mete out their own personal versions of death penalties to those who dare disagree."

In a style similar to Martin Luther, a group of Unification Church members made the above statement, as well as many others, in the charter issue of the Round Table (July 18th), an "underground" newsletter for dissenting members. Most denominations have dissenting publications which air news and views that may be critical of church leadership. Most people, however, don't think of the Unification Church as a denomination, let alone one which would have dissension growing within its ranks.

The Round Table is intended to serve as an outlet for "anger" among members and a "vehicle for dialogue" within the church. And why are members angry? Because, according to one unsigned writer, there has "been a split between the ideals and the practices of the Unification Church (U.C.) ... Leadership isn't open to output or criticism from members except in the most superficial ways." One issue of conflict touched upon in the newsletter is the rift in the church between the Oriental's—mainly Korean—strict style of leadership and the more democratic Western members who stress discussion rather than unwavering obedience. Most members who have had any problems with the U.C. leadership in the past have usually left the church. But the presence of publications like The Round Table—even if they speak for only a few—could be a sign that more dissatisfied members will now be staying and trying to get a hearing for their views in the church—even if they conflict with those of the leadership.

In reflecting on the present and the future of the Unification Church in still another "moonie" dissenting publication called Our Network, member Peter Califano makes some sober observations. For one thing, he writes in the August issue, many of the members who were matched up with marriage partners during the famous mass wedding of 1982 at Madison Square Garden are "unhappy with their matched mate," with some getting divorces. Califano also offers the prediction that soon leader Sun Myung Moon may return to Korea for good, taking with him many members and leaving his projects in the U.S. to flounder.

In concluding, Califano offers four not-very-optimistic scenarios for the future of the church: 1) The Church can become a more bizarre sectarian group," exerting tighter control on members. 2) The U.C. will form its own denominations. 3) "The U.C. will fuse into an existing Christian denomination. 4) The American movement will fragmentate and die out."

CHRISTIANS COMPETING WITH "NEW CHINA"

Broadcasting has played a large part in forming the evangelical Christian community in China. But today, Christian broadcasters find themselves in competition with the high quality broadcasting allowed recently by China's more open policies, according to reports on religious broadcasting in the August issue of *China and the Church Today*.

During the cultural revolution in the 1940's foreign missionaries were driven out and gospel broadcasts from other countries began coming into China. Since Bibles became scarce, broadcasts consisted of Bible readings at slow speeds in order for people to write them down. According to the Hong-Kong based magazine, today much of Christian programming is focused on theological training programs which attempt to make up for the lack of formal education among pastors and evangelists. Most of secular Chinese broadcasting in the past aired songs and plays promoting the party and the revolution.

But today the situation has changed. China is offering more diverse dramas, news shows, as well as a few programs from the West through its air waves. Writers, F. Brent Fulton and Ho Muhora, fear that religious broadcasting may become ghettoized on the Sunday morning slot, as the quality of secular broadcasting and the economy get better—a phenomenon which has occurred in Taiwan, as well as in the U.S. The new technology and creativity of today's broadcasting in China, is forcing Christians—who still broadcast from Hong Kong or overseas—to "break free from the mold of traditional program strategy" in order to reach a wide audience, according to Fulton in another article in the issue. "Most crucial is the need for scriptwriters and announcers who can remain consistently relevant to non-Christian listeners, keeping a Christian perspective while, at the same time, avoiding the temptation to slip into a straight evangelistic approach."

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS — TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS

The recent Southern Baptist convention held in Dallas displayed the sharp division the denomination is experiencing between fundamentalists or conservatives (who have now gained leadership) and moderates. Some claim that the current turmoil is over doctrine, others claim that political power is the real issue. But Southern Baptist historian Bill Leonard, writing in the ecumenical weekly, *Christian Century* (July 17-24), thinks that the problems may stem from geography more than anything else.

Leonard argues that beneath the fundamentalist battle for the faith is the "hopeless struggle to preserve the Southernness of that most Southern denomination." With the breakdown of 19th century Southern culture, he adds, "the Baptists are facing the dilemma of reconciling a 19th century orientation with an increasingly 21st century world." At the recent convention, Leonard reported that "Big church, Southern white pastors monopolized almost every facet of convention programs," even though S.B.C. churches are represented and growing vibrantly in non-Southern, ethnic and urban areas.

Leonard compares the moderates to the Democratic Party. They seem unable to find charismatic leaders and an agenda around which to unite their diverse coalition. About the future he writes, "I am not optimistic that the S.B.C. will reach the 21st century intact. Some fragmentation, if not outright schism seems almost unavoidable."

Reading a report of the Dallas convention in the arch-fundamentalist *Faith for the Family* magazine (July-Aug.), published by Bob Jones University, might make the reader question whether it is the same Southern Baptists that Leonard was writing about. David Beale writes that, instead of promoting division, the convention was a call for unity and an attempt at avoiding controversy. Rather than the conservatives holding power in the convention, the "liberals" really hold the cards in the denomination through control of the seminaries, and true fundamentalists should leave the convention, according to Beale. Even if conservatives succeed in placing like-minded trustees in various S.B.C. agencies, students leaving the seminaries "will spread falsehood and the tainted Sunday school literature will corrupt more Southern Baptists and increase support for the liberal philosophy."

Christians in relating to non-Christian enterprises, Cheng thinks that Amity may be a way of governing the activities between Christians abroad and those in China.

Despite the differences between Leonard and Beale, it is interesting to note that they are both pessimistic about the current S.B.C. leadership. Writes Beale, "If these S.B.C. conservatives intend to attempt the impossible task of purging the seminaries of theological liberalism, then they should be honest about it. If they don't intend to purge, it appears that their only purpose in this battle is ecclesiastical power and control."

SURVEY ● AMITY — A SIGN OF CHINA'S NEW OPENESS TO OVERSEAS CHRISTIANS?

In a reversal of China's foreign policy, a new organization called the Amity Foundation is encouraging Christians from overseas to send in funds and workers in order to assist in the modernization of the country. Foreign influences of Christians had been forbidden in China for close to 40 years since the communist takeover. The foundation, an independent organization that promotes the work of China's official church (made up of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self-Patriotic-Movement), exists solely to promote social services, not evangelism. But a facility for printing Bibles is also being planned. Responses in the religious press to the formation of Amity have ranged from enthusiastic to mildly suspicious.

In an article in *Christianity Today*, one evangelical China authority said that Amity provides "an opportunity to relate to the church in China in a non-paternalistic fashion." Phillip Wickeri, an American serving as overseas coordinator for the foundation, said in a *Religious News Service* report that "it [Amity] offers creative possibilities for low-key Christian Witness in collaboration with non-Christian partners in service to the wider community — without insisting on 'making points' for the institutional church."

But in *China and the Church Today*, a Hong Kong-based evangelical magazine, May Cheng writes that Amity does mark a "new phase in the development of the relationship between Chinese Christians and the church overseas, but it does not imply any changes in the basic religious policy of socialist China." Because Bishop Ding Guangxun, president of the China Christian Council, has said in the past that the council should be kept informed of efforts of overseas Christians in relating to non-Christian enterprises, Chen thinks that Amity may be a way of governing the activities between Christians abroad and those in China.

Meanwhile, *British Weekly and Christian Record* reports that Open Doors, a American ministry that smuggles Bibles into China, has given Amity a "cool welcome". A spokesman for the organization said that even if the Amity-proposed printing plant turns out 200,000 Bibles a year "there will still be 45 million Christians without a Bible after five years... Its very presence in China may eventually result in tougher controls or increased vetting of existing personnel and resources." The *British Weekly* reporter notes that Open Doors plans to carry on with its "courier work".

Religion Watch
P.O. Box 652
North Bellmore, N.Y. 11710