

RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

VOL. 5 NO. 9

July/August 1990

NEXT WAVE OF THE NEW AGE TO BE IN HI-TECH?

New Age and Eastern religious concepts are increasingly being adapted to new forms of technology that are said to alter consciousness. The new meeting of technology and mysticism can be found in the numerous "brain machines" which are becoming accessible to the public, the computer breakthrough known as cyberspace or "virtual reality" [briefly mentioned in the March/April supplement], and especially in the work of Robert Anton Wilson, a California-based futurologist and science fiction writer. While the brain machines and virtual reality work on different concepts, they both "serve as aids to meditation and higher consciousness... They're similar to psychedelics but induce different states," Wilson recently told RELIGION WATCH. He says that the fledgling movement combining technology and mysticism could be placed "in the scientific wing of the New Age movement."

One brain machine reviewed in Wilson's quarterly newsletter Trajectories (Summer '89) is the Persinger Helmet, which sends out electromagnetic waves to the brain creating such paranormal and mystical perceptions as out-of-the body and UFO experiences. Other devices, marketed by such companies as the Fairfax, Calif.-based Inner Technologies, include the Alpha-Pacer and Inner Quest and appear to operate on principles similar to bio-feedback, which are said to effect relaxed and meditative states in a person. The newer development of virtual reality, much of it still in an experimental phase, enables users to create and participate in their own "worlds" through computer technology. With the help of computer software and hardware-- usually in the form of a helmet and a glove-- people can feel they are experiencing anything from outer space to Charles Dicken's London. From his experience with virtual reality during a recent New York conference presentation (with LSD pioneer Timothy Leary), Wilson sees an "ultimate" use for the technology beyond that of games, (already on the market), education and communication-- namely that of mysticism or "Techno-Zen."

The mystical uses of brain machines and virtual reality also help explain an important part of Wilson's philosophy: the concept that people create much of their own "realities." Wilson writes in the current issue of Trajectories (Spring) that modern neurosciences have discovered that much of everyday reality emerges from "random signals" that our brains organize into various patterns. Thus, the new technologies--especially virtual reality-- help people become "aware of ourselves as co-creators of our 'reality.'" He adds that virtual reality teaches the same lessons as LSD, Zen and yoga-- "that any Virtual Reality, including Consensus [or everyday] Reality, contains elements,

Religion Watch is published monthly except once during July and August. Richard P. Cimino; Editor/Publisher.
A subscription in the U.S. is \$17.50 per year. \$19 for libraries and Canadian subscribers. Write for foreign rates.
The mailing address is P.O. Box 652, North Bellmore, NY 11710 (ISSN 0886-2141).

such technology "we enter the 'detachment from fixed ideas' that both Buddhism and science have always sought. And the wonderful thing about this technology lies in the fact that it hasn't come from a non-white culture, and not even the most dogmatic Fundamentalists [Protestant or Materialist] can seriously call it 'brainwashing'...as this technology invades computer games, entertainment, education, etc., the Zen detachment from conditioned perception and conditioned dogma will become available to millions..." (Trajectories, The Permanent Press, P.O. Box 700305, San Jose, CA 95170)

ANTI-SATANIST MOVEMENT MORE OF A REALITY THAN SATANIST CRIME?

With a growing number of crimes reported to be influenced by Satanism during recent years [see November '88 RW], a burgeoning anti-Satanist movement has emerged that is also causing controversy. In a two-part article, the Skeptical Inquirer (Spring and Summer issues), a publication critical of supernatural and paranormal phenomenon, claims that while an organized Satanic crime "movement" may be non-existent, the anti-Satanist movement continues to pick up strength, with law enforcers assuming the role of "religious polemicists." Robert D. Hicks writes that "cult crime" has "become a trendy topic on the police seminar circuit." Hicks, a law enforcement specialist in Virginia who gradually became skeptical and then "alarmed" over the errors in the police model of cult crime, adds that "fundamentalist Christianity" drives the occult-crime model espoused by police seminars. "They employ fundamentalist rhetoric, distribute literature that emanates from fundamentalist authorities...and they sometimes team up with clergy to give seminars on Satanism. The most notable circular among cult-crime investigators, 'File 18 Newsletter,' follows a Christian worldview." Many appear to hold to the newsletter's view that a Satanic network "exists in all strata of society and maintains extreme secrecy to shroud its program of murder."

Often missing in these cult seminars is the "voice of non-traditional belief" outside of conservative Christianity; in fact groups such as the Neopagans and Wicca are often wrongly viewed as an extended family of the Satanists, according to Hicks. The seminars also distort occult teachings, such as those of Aleister Crowley and Anton LaVey, to make them appear as forerunners of contemporary Satanism. Often the Seminars' evidence of Satanist-led crimes consist of newspaper reports from second-hand sources (mainly citing the views of like-minded crime enforcers) and the testimonies of "cult survivors." These survivors often relate the abuse they experienced as children to Satanic rituals, but they have yet to produce "physical evidence" for such a connection. More often these survivors have Multiple Personality Disorders or have borrowed Satanic symbols from popular culture to represent their fears from an abused childhood, usually under the guidance of psychotherapists, Hicks writes. The model of today's cult-crimes emerged from a "remarkable myth-making network of therapists, patients and investigators blending together specific idiosyncratic data into one...grid...[with] the whole thing sustained by deeply held religious belief," says one study Hicks cites. He concludes that the news of "Satanic doings" is a legend created to "tell a story of the dissipation of values most Americans describe as 'traditional.'" (Skeptical Inquirer, Box 229, Buffalo, NY 14215)

MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM DECLINING IN INNER-CITIES, REVIVING DOWNTOWN

Mainline Protestants are finding a "growing irrelevance" in American inner cities, according to the New York Times (May 31). Chris Hedges writes that the "programs that the churches began two or three decades ago have fizzled out for lack of funds and support. These programs, while often providing needed services, have frequently had trouble drawing new church members from minority neighborhoods. And most seminary students who 20 years ago saw urban ministry as one of the churches' more exalted missions, now turn away from the struggling congregations that can barely offer them a living wage." An important factor in such disinterest is that today's students are older-- their median age is in the early 30s-- and have families that they would want to protect from the financial and personal risks of inner city work. New York's Union Theological Seminary, the nation's leading mainline divinity school for urban ministry, found in a recent survey of its 1989 graduates that 34 of a total of 62 went on to be ordained, and that of the 34 who entered parish work, 15 chose inner city ministry. In 1965, Union's class of 48 ministerial students sent 38 into congregations and 27 into inner cities.

"Urban ministry professors say that many of the ministers who enter congregational work in poor sections of cities leave after a few years," Hedges adds. Often there is a culture clash between today's mainline ministers and inner city church members. "An increasing number [of inner city ministers] are women and gay men. Most have been influenced by liberation theology," Hedges reports. Most inner-city church members, on the other hand, find more relevance in the emotional services of indigenous Pentecostal and charismatic services. Says one black mainline minister, "...black folks don't want to go to a mission every Sunday where they pick up food stamps and surplus cheese. Black folks want to know that their church is a place where they can meet Jesus. They don't want to go to church to be helped by white folks."

But mainline Protestantism appears to be doing better outside of the poorer inner-cities in the older and often revived downtown urban areas. Last June RW reported on reversals of long-time membership losses in the old downtown "First Churches" of the mainline United Church of Christ (UCC) in several U.S. cities. Such a reversal may be taking place in other mainline bodies as well. The Sunday Oregonian newspaper (April 15), reports that the "Old First" churches [they are called "First" because they were the first congregations of their denominations to be established in a city] of several mainline denominations in downtown Portland, Oregon are "undergoing revival...reporting new growth-- new families, new missions, new purpose." These First churches that were "once at the heart of the city and helped form its ethical and moral core," peaked in the 1950s and went into decline until recently. One reason for the upturn in Portland is that these churches have re-emphasized community involvement--as in working for low-income housing, for instance-- while also paying more attention to adult education, such as through establishing small discussion groups. The city's First Presbyterian Church, for instance, had an average member age of 68 in 1985; today it is drawing many in their 30s. To make their voices heard on social issues these urban congregations are forming a new

"Association of Downtown Churches." [Since Oregon and the rest of the West Coast are often viewed as "trend-setter" states by social forecasters, there may well be future mainline growth in downtown areas in other parts of the U.S.]

CHRISTIAN BOOK PUBLISHERS MOVING TOWARD THE SECULAR

Christian book publishers are increasingly "crossing over" into the secular book market as they deal with candid views on contemporary issues, according to the West Coast Review of Books (Vol. 15, No. 3). The practice of Christian publishers issuing mainly spiritual and theological books titles through Christian bookstores is giving way to their publishing books of a more pragmatic, "down-to earth" variety on a wide range of social issues that are finding a welcome in secular outlets. In surveying the recent offerings of the larger Christian publishers [mostly evangelicals], such as Tyndale House, Moody Press and Bethany House, writer D. David Dries notes that many books are branching out in new directions, from fiction and political issues to well-being and health- oriented topics. Books on troubled areas of family life, such as teenage suicide and sexual abuse, for instance, are also increasingly common. One successful cross-over book is Intervarsity Press' "Beirut Diary." The book, which is said to carry a Christian message without using much Christian terminology, was placed on "Current Affairs" shelves in secular stores.

The new approach can also be seen in the growing tendency of Christian books to criticize other Christians, a practice many of these publishers formerly discouraged-- at least until the televangelist scandals. "Publishers are now becoming openly critical of their brethren in the ranks," Dries writes. One example of this is the recent book, "Turning Hearts Toward Home," by Rolf Zettersten which is a "harshly critical" assessment of Dr. James Dobson, a major name in the evangelical world and bestselling author on Christian family books. The Catholic market is also feeling the impact of crossover books interest. Such Catholic publishers as Our Sunday Visitor and the conservative Ignatius Press [best known for its controversial book, "The Great AIDS Coverup"] are publishing more general interest works that are finding a place on secular store shelves. The main reason for the change among Christian booksellers is greater concern for profitability. "...they've been preaching this philosophy for years, but it seems that only recently has the information become gospel." (West Coast Review of Books, 5625 Fountain Ave., Upper Terrace, Hollywood, CA 90029)

CAMPUS CHAPLAINCIES GAINING GREATER SOCIAL ROLE IN UNIVERSITIES

Campus chaplains and chaplaincies are becoming newly significant to universities, according to Context (June 1), a newsletter on the interaction of religion with culture. "Campus religious leaders are emerging as mediators in many of the controversies that trouble colleges and universities. Both students and administrators are turning to them...In an age of diversity and multi-culturalism, the religious communities are providing a sense of intimacy and continuity that universities are losing," says Rabbi Michael Paley of Columbia University. The article, originally published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, says that students and administrators are especially

turning to [apparently mainline Protestant] chaplains on such issues as racism and homophobia. George W. Jones of Indiana's Ball State University says, "People in religious affairs have been talking about pluralism for 25 years. At one point, I was just kind of doing my own thing on the side. Now I'm looked to as the lead person to help the university address these issues." (Context, 205 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60606)

NEW STAGE OF POLITICIAN-CHURCH CONFRONTATION ON ABORTION?

Recent events show that the conflict over abortion between American Catholic politicians and church leaders has reached a new level of tension, according to the National Catholic Reporter (June 15). Recent signs of mounting pressure on public figures who support pro-choice policies include: The recent excommunication of the director of an abortion clinic in Corpus Christi, Texas; New Jersey Governor James Florio resigning from the Knights of Columbus after the Catholic fraternal organization in that state discouraged providing a public forum and honors for pro-choicers; other branches of the Knights debating the practice of ousting pro-choice politicians, including Senator Edward Kennedy and New York Governor Mario Cuomo; influential Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York stating that excommunications for politicians dissenting on the church's position on abortion should be considered. The paper cites Christopher Kauffman, editor of the U.S. Catholic Historian, who equates the intensity of today's public battles about the obligations of a Catholic politician regarding abortion law with the 1962 decision by a New Orleans Archbishop to excommunicate a white supremacist during the civil rights movement. (National Catholic Reporter, P.O. Box 419281, Kansas City, MO 64141)

CONSERVATIVES STILL A GROWTH FACTOR IN SBC?

In the May RW summary of a Wall Street Journal article, it was reported that the Southern Baptist Convention's loss of momentum in membership and financial support can be attributed to the infighting between fundamentalist and moderate factions and to the denomination's takeover by the former [the strength of such a takeover was again demonstrated at the June Convention of Southern Baptists where moderates were defeated for the 12th time]. But in a critique of the Wall Street Journal article featured in Christian News (June 4), journalist James Hefley writes that any slowdown in growth in the SBC is more the fault of the moderates than the fundamentalists (Hefley prefers "conservative" as the less biased label). Hefley writes that the article tends to favor the moderate cause and fails to "note the abysmal record of leading moderates in evangelism, in comparison to that of conservatives. I compared the baptismal records of six leading churches in Louisville, three led by moderate pastors and three by conservative pastors. over a 10-year period, the conservative churches baptized over ten times (4,031) as many new converts as did the moderates (368)...Take away the growth that has continued in the conservative churches, and the SBC would be in much worse shape." (Christian News, P.O. Box 168, New Haven, MO 63068)

SOVIET JEWISH IMMIGRATION-- HOW PEACEFUL FOR ISRAEL?

As large numbers of Soviet Jewish immigrants are arriving in Israel, observers and critics are finding that religion or the lack of religion may be a key factor in determining their views on the conflicts in the Middle East, according to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (June), a magazine that takes a "pro-Palestinian" editorial slant. The publication cites Mikhail Agursky of Hebrew University's Center for Soviet and East European Research as saying that the Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel can be a positive factor for Israeli-fostered peace moves because they are "religiously non-practicing." Agursky views the newcomers as unindoctrinated in the right-wing Zionist arguments for Israel's "territorial expansion and ethnic repression." Hence he considers them unlikely to be lured into the embrace of such right wing and ultra-Orthodox political parties as Agudath Israel, Kach and Tehiya, which maintain hard-line positions against Israel-Palestinian negotiations.

But the Jewish left-wing New Israel Fund (NIF) views the Soviet Jewish emigration with more concern. The group's fear is that the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party's control of the government's Ministries of Interior and Absorption will determine whether the new immigrant children will go to "secular, religious or ultra-Orthodox schools." With Shas having such power of assignment, NIF questions what the assignees' religious outlook will be "after a year of conditioning." It is added that that the immigrants "may very well import certain Soviet-generated prejudices which will handicap their adjustment to inter-religious realities in the Middle East; Muslim-bashing has characterized much Soviet coverage of the invasion of Afganistan and the anti-Communist uprisings in Central Asia." (Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, P.O. Box 53062, Washington, DC 20009)

NEW STRAINS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES?

The predominantly leftist social activist thrust of the World Council of Churches may be weakening because of the changes coming out of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, writes Ronald J. Sider in the ESA Advocate (May), the newsletter of the liberal Evangelicals for Social Action. Sider attended the council's recent conference on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," (the theme of the WCC's social justice program) in Seoul, Korea and found that "a major coalition in the WCC is suddenly crumbling. As long as vicious totalitarianism make it very dangerous for Christians in the communist bloc to critique their societies, Christians from the second world [communist countries] often failed to criticize their own societies while joining in the denunciation of market economies. Justice activists from developed countries were often more vocal about justice than freedom."

Such church leaders found allies with "Third-world spokespersons who found it convenient to play on Northern guilt (some justified, some not) and largely overlook the contribution of cultural factors...in creating third-world poverty. The result was a one sided attack on market economies and near silence on the evils of the Eastern bloc...Now the coalition has collapsed. At Seoul, it was the Soviets and East Europeans who dared to speak most openly (and unfortunately too uncritically)

about the advantages of a market economy. And the East Europeans appeared more delighted with their democratic revolution than others at the convocation. Third-world leaders now fear that everyone may uncritically accept a triumphalistic capitalism that will ride roughshod over the poor of the earth." (ESA Advocate, 10 Lancaster Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19151)

FEW CHANGES FOR LIBERATION THEOLOGY AFTER EASTERN EUROPE'S REVOLUTIONS?

How have the liberation theologians and other theologians who have used Marxist-socialist thought viewed the collapse of communist governments in recent months? According to Leonardo Boff, a leading Brazilian Catholic liberation theologian, the recent events have been a vindication of "democratic socialism," reports the liberal National Catholic Reporter (June 15). Boff was recently in East Germany and found few proponents of socialism except the old guard and he concludes that "socialism is living through its Good Friday, a painful purifying experience. But it will know a resurrection." Boff says that while "patriarchal socialism," marked by authoritarianism and bureaucracy, has failed, he pins his hopes on a "truly democratic socialism, welling up from below..." He adds that "the use of Marxist categories has been and continues to be useful to help the oppressed understand the causes of their oppression...[Liberation theology] is not compromised by the collapse of authoritarian socialism." But writer Peter Hebblethwaite, a Boff supporter and critic of Pope John Paul II, has some doubts, writing that Boff's "attempt to salvage something from the wreckage of Marxism seems to owe as much to optimism as to experience."

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY EMERGING IN EASTERN EUROPE, USSR

In the April report on the secularization of the Christian Democratic parties in Europe, it was mentioned that the newly emerging parties in Eastern Europe are being seen as the last best hope for Christian Democracy. The National Catholic Register (June 3) takes a closer look at these parties and reports that the religious factor is a strong factor in their growth. In recent East German and Hungarian elections Christian Democratic-influenced parties proved victorious, and, especially in the case of the latter, have stressed Christian values. In Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland, such parties have found less support, possibly due to criticisms that they were too closely aligned with one church.

Hungarian sociologist Miklos Tomka says that "The greater part of society, though short of specific ideas, favors parties which appear to stand for honesty, morality and traditions. Today, it's these Christian parties which seem to offer a great sense of fulfillment." In most of the Soviet Union's republics there are already two Christian Democratic-based parties in action [although they have felt some pressure by authorities]. The New York Times (May 14) quotes Andrè Louis, Secretary-General of the Christian Democratic International as saying that "In the long run, I think Christian Democracy has its best opportunity in the Soviet Union. Christian Democrats there have come to political life out of religious conviction. In searching for a more fraternal and useful religion, they come to recognize the need for political activity." (National Catholic Register, 12700 Ventura Blvd., Suite 200, Studio City, CA 91604)

SWISS MOVING TOWARD 'AUTO-RELIGION'?

The Swiss are constructing their own forms of religion that can take in both orthodox Christian doctrines and such "foreign" beliefs as reincarnation, according to the Catholic newsmagazine 30 Days (June). A recent survey conducted in connection with Switzerland's National Program of Research on "cultural pluralism and national identity" and presented in the weekly, Hebdo, found the Swiss to be theistic and Christian-oriented people; 70 percent of the 1,500 respondents acknowledge that they not only believe in God but hold that "God has made himself known in the person of Jesus Christ." But while 17 percent still go to church (a fairly high figure for Europe), a full 85 percent hold that "there is no need of the Church" in order to believe. More surprisingly, nearly one-third of those who embrace the "Christian idea of resurrection" (33 percent) consider it unproblematically compatible with a belief in reincarnation.

While only 50 percent of those polled say they see a connection between their own faith and their political choices, 84.2 percent acknowledge the role of religion in shaping their ecological convictions. The magazine adds that "the idea that one lives another earthly life beyond the present one parallels rather well with the concern for preserving nature and the environment." The Swiss belief in reincarnation is close to the percentage of American belief in this concept during the early 1980s and to the figures projected for Europe by the year 2000. Another finding was that 40 percent hold that "humanity will enter a new age if takes what is best from each religion." Co-author of the study, Roland Campiche, says the results show that "One can believe in the same way and with the same intensity in things that come from different religious sources." The Swiss may be moving rapidly toward forms of "auto-religion," where each one, without feeling the need "of not calling oneself Christian," constructs piece by piece his or her own personal religion, according to the study. Sociologist Jean-Francois Mayer says there is a multiplication of new religious movements (particularly oriental ones) in Switzerland, which may be used by people to create an "elastic...à la carte faith." (30 Days, 2515 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA 94118)

Religion Watch

P.O. Box 652

North Bellmore, N.Y. 11710

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED.

BULK RATE U.S. POSTAGE PAID Bellmore, N.Y. 11710 Permit No. 33
--

Inside This Issue:

- *Looking at the Scientific New Age*
- *The Anti-Satanist Movement; Soviet Christian Democracy*

TIME-DATED MATERIAL — PLEASE RUSH

FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

July/August, 1990

PRESS NOTES

* The current issue of the occult magazine Gnosis (Summer) suggests that there may be an unusual dialogue developing between some orthodox Christians and those involved in esoteric (or occult) spirituality. The issue is devoted to "Orthodoxy," in various forms, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish or Islamic, and shows considerable appreciation for traditional religion. What is more noteworthy is that the appreciation is coming from the other direction as well. John Garvey, an Eastern Orthodox writer for the mainstream Catholic magazine, Commonweal, examines the differences and similarities between Orthodox Christianity and Gnosticism in his article and sees the two spiritual approaches as complimentary to each other in some ways. Charles Coulombe, a leader of a movement of young orthodox Catholics (and a columnist for the conservative Catholic newspaper, the National Catholic Register), goes a step further, advocating a return to "magic" and the "baptism" of the occult or hermetic traditions by the church, which he says has become too rational. For a copy of this issue, send \$4.00 to: Gnosis, P.O. Box 14217, San Francisco, CA 94110.

* For those seeking to understand the diversity and complexities of fundamentalism, The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: a View From Within, a Response From Without, (Eerdmans Publishing, 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. \$14.95) edited by Norman J. Cohen, might be the best place to look. The book, a collection and enlargement of addresses given at a conference last year, deal with most aspects of contemporary fundamentalism-- Christian (Protestant and Catholic), Jewish, Islamic and Hindu-- including its political expressions. Especially noteworthy is the chapter on "Fundamentalism in It's Global Contours," by James Davison Hunter, which cross-culturally examines the common characteristics that make various movements classifiable as fundamentalists. Historian George Marsden provides an unbiased and interesting historical account of American Protestant fundamentalism, and evangelical theologian Clark Pinnock does a good job of stepping inside Christian fundamentalist shoes and defending many of their positions.

* The rapid growth of evangelical Protestantism in Latin America has been a surprise and sometimes a thorn in the side of many scholars, journalists and other observers specializing in the region. Often the evangelical phenomenon has been brushed aside as insignificant as compared with liberation theology, or portrayed as a cultural and political invasion from the United States to quiet revolutionary movements. Two recent books look at Latin American evangelicals in a new light. Is Latin America Turning Protestant: The Politics of Evangelical Growth (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720. \$24.95) by anthropologist David Stoll, argues that evangelical Protestantism should be viewed as pioneering in social change just as much as liberation theology. The evangelicals' emphasis on personal conversion and Christian service is gradually challenging long-entrenched Latin

American social attitudes, such as machismo and the subserviance of women, according to Stoll.

Sociologist David Martin's book Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America (Basil Blackwell, 3 Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA 02142. \$29.95) is similar in scope to Stoll's, giving an indepth examination of the evangelical (especially the Pentecostal) movements throughout the region (including the Carribean). Martin focuses less on the context of liberation theology, but he provides interesting accounts of how Protestantism is becoming more "Latin" even as it transforms Latin American social attitudes (such as toward less violence and decreased faith in the military)-- as much as Methodism did during the industrial revolution in England.

ON/FILE: A Survey of Current Movements and People In Religion

1) Mythopoetic Men's Movement is a recent attempt by men to claim some of the "gender-spirituality" that has been largely the province of women in the Goddess movement. The movement is made up of small groups and explores a "masculinity of yore, one they see steeped in courage, compassion, fathering and chivalry." Shepherd Bliss, a leader of the movement and San Francisco psychologist, says most mythopoetic groups meet in the woods where they sing songs, read poetry, revere warrior figures and search for a link to "Father Earth." (Source: Wall Street Journal, June 7).

2) The election of Metropolitan Aleksy of Leningrad as head of the Russian Orthodox Church suggests that this body may be undergoing its own period of glasnost. Alesky broke several rules in being elected: he is non-Russian and was the first new leader to gain the office free of government manipulation since the Bolshevik Revolution. The new Estonian-born patriarch of the 50 million-member church is more outspoken against communism and supportive of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms than his predecessor, Patriarch Pimen, and his election signaled a continued commitment to ecumenism, especially with the Roman Catholics. His election in the midst of a growing Russian nationalism has surprised many observers, and may be a move by the church against such an uprising. (Source: Time Magazine, June 18)

3) The Movement for Christian Democracy is a new organization to promote Christian principles in all of the main British political parties. England has been one of the few European countries without a religious-based political party, such as the many Christian Democratic movements throughout Europe and now the Soviet Union. The formation of the MCD, which is made up mainly of evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics from the Church of England, developed shortly after a more liberal abortion bill was recently passed by the government. Although only two parliamentary sponsors are in the MCD, it is reported that many politicians are "feeling increasingly frustrated with the meagre regard given to Christian opinion." Although some want to make the MCD a political party, others prefer the movement to remain non-partisan as it seeks to work for such broad principles as, "social justice, respect for life, decentralization of power...and wise stewardship." (Source: June 15th Christian Week, 11 Carteret St., London, England SW1H 9DJ)

CORRECTION: Last month's report on religious beliefs in Sweden carried incorrect church attendance figures. The report that was cited said that church attendance has increased by 200,000 to a total of 9.2 million people, while it was also noted that Sweden has a population of 8.4 million. The 8.4 million figure is correct, while the total church attendance statistic is obviously off-base; The accurate attendance count was not available from the publication we cited for the information.