

# RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

Volume 8 Number 3

JANUARY 1993

## 1992 BRINGS CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES TO RELIGIOUS SCENE

Despite the bold headlines of religious new stories during 1992 reporting on the Church of England's decision to ordain women, the issuing of a universal Catholic catechism, sexual abuse scandals in the churches, and the Christian right's losses in the election of Bill Clinton, the year did not deliver many new trends as much as confirm existing ones that emerged at the start of the decade. The following survey offers a selective look at events and issues that highlight long range trends, as well as hint at new developments. After each entry, the issues of RELIGION WATCH where these trends are given fuller treatment are cited.

1) The election of Bill Clinton was no final nail driven into the New Christian Right's coffin, but many sympathizers acted as if that were the case. The election will not hurt Christian right activism at the local level, nor did it indicate the collapse of the conservative Christian voting bloc. But the movement has lost both its place in national politics and one of its most galvanizing causes--abortion--if Clinton enacts pro-choice legislation as promised. In surveying the post-election editorials in the religious press, those on the liberal end of the spectrum--from New Age to mainline Protestant--tended to view the Clinton presidency as providing a second spring for exerting their influence on such concerns as environmentalism, civil liberties, feminism, gay rights, and poverty and health. It is another question as to whether the mainline Protestant groups can easily revive such political influence as they continue to wrestle with internal division and decline over many of these same issues. The Democratic administration is also likely to bring groups closer to the surface that are attempting to find a middle ground on moral and family issues, such as the communitarian movement (see the supplement for more on this movement) [see March and December issues RW for more on the Christian Right]

2) While the controversy over sexual abuse in religious organizations has been taking place for several years, 1992 saw several denominations make a public stand on the issue through numerous statements. It also marked the first time the Catholic Church has publicly acknowledged its responsibility for defending its clergy in such cases, as well as its sponsorship of long-term rehabilitation programs for those charged with sexual abuse. [December RW]

3) The decision to ordain women into the priesthood in the Church of England was probably the most controversial and divisive issue in the

Religion Watch is published monthly except once during July and August. Richard P. Cimino; Editor/Publisher. Erling Jorstad; Contributing Editor. A subscription in the U.S. is \$19.95 per year. \$25 for libraries. Write for foreign rates. Mailing address: P.O. Box 652, North Bellmore, NY 11710 (ISSN 0886 2141)

Christian world last year, especially because it was such a close vote. The decision may cause irreparable division between mainline and traditionalist Anglicans, as well as seriously set back ecumenical relations between the Anglican communion and Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, which oppose women priests. Anglican-Catholic relations were already frayed from a Vatican statement issued last summer that made papal authority a key concept for a reunified church. [see this issue].

4) The recent publication of the new Catholic universal catechism was a significant step in the drive to preserve doctrinal orthodoxy in the face of the increasing diversity and pluralism in the Catholic Church. The catechism both reaffirms traditional doctrine, as befitting the conservative tone of Pope John Paul II, and also directly addresses such contemporary moral issues as environmental decay, homosexuality, media morality, and business ethics. The work's supporters see it as a major means of holding on to the faithful and reaching out to potential new members. A similar emphasis on evangelization and spiritual concern exhibited last October at Latin America's Catholic bishops conference may signal a turn away from the strong social activist stance associated with liberation theology toward more Vatican-based teachings. But this new emphasis may not be due to growing Vatican control of the church as much as Latin American church leaders' own concern about the high rate of conversions to evangelical Protestantism. [The implications of these developments in Latin America on the future of liberation theology will be examined in the February RW]

5) Competition and pluralism are still new terms in Eastern (and now Central) Europe and the former Soviet Union, but they increasingly define the religious situation in such post-communist societies. Without attempting to proclaim any one group or religion the "winner" in such a religious free market, it appears that Western evangelicals have made the biggest impact among the foreign groups. The success of evangelical groups, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, in gaining access to the Russian school system to teach "Christian ethics" will give them long-range influence in the region-- setting up the strange scenario of American evangelicals wielding greater social impact on Russian society than on their own society during the next four years. (February, November, December issues)

6) Intra-religious conflict appeared to gain a new intensity in 1992-- from Muslim-Christian conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, and Indonesia, to violent struggles between Hindus and Muslims in India. While these conflicts have their own particular causes, most appeared to be fueled by one group fearing the growth and eventual domination by the other group. Such kinds of conflict will likely be resistant to the easy diplomacy of peace conferences, or the inter-faith good will of religious officials. (July-August, September, October issues) -- Erling Jorstad, professor of History at St. Olaf College, contributed to this review.

## A FUTURE THEOLOGICAL RENAISSANCE?

When Time magazine (Fall) turned its eye to religion during a special issue on the next century, it forecasted that "theology is a dying art." In response to this prediction, theologian Gabriel Fackre writes that the Time writer "had not done his homework about some important things

happening now that hint of things to come." In his occasional Theology and Culture Newsletter (Advent), Fackre writes that "In the past few years, the field of theology, both in academia and in the churches, has shown some remarkable stirrings...After a dearth of writing in this genre, the last decade or so has seen almost 50 new projects in systematic theology appear, ones that cover the range of traditional Christian teaching-- creation, the fall, Christ, church, salvation, and consummation...This is a direct challenge to recent conventional wisdom that theology can only be done as 'loose-leaf theology.'" Fackre divides these new theological works into three major types: the "retrievers" are those seeking to return to the Christian and biblical tradition, such as the evangelical theologians Paul Jewett (in his work "God, Creation, & Revelation"), Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest ("Integrative Theology"), and Robert Lightner ("Evangelical Theology"), and the self-identified "paleo-orthodox" Thomas Oden ("Life in the Spirit").

At the other end of the spectrum are the works of reconstructers who attempt to revise theology in radical directions, such as with feminism, liberation theology and religious pluralism. These theologians include Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engle ("Lift Every Voice"), Ninian Smart and Steve Konstantine ("Christian Systematic Theology in World Context"), and Robert Neville ("A Theology Primer"). The reinterpreters hold firmly to classical teachings--in both Protestant and Catholic expressions-- but seek to reexamine them in the light of contemporary issues. They include Daniel Miglore ("Faith Seeking Understanding"), and Franz Jozef Beeck ("God Encountered"). Two of the best-known contemporary theologians, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jurgen Moltmann, are in the midst of major systematics projects that are probably the most extensive in scale. While Judaism has never had a systematic theology genre, Eugene Borowitz has just written a "postmodern Jewish theology" with his book, "Renewing the Covenant." (Theology and Culture Newsletter, Andover Newton Theological School, 210 Herricks Rd., Newton Centre, MA 02159)

## TELEVANGELISTS TRIM PROMOTIONAL TIME, WHILE TV RELIGION LANGUISHES

The time television evangelists devote to their own commercial messages, such as asking for money and promoting their ministries, is declining. Also fading are the "long-winded, teary-eyed appeals for checks, as religious broadcasters switch to briefer, more down-to-earth requests for donations," reports the Washington Post (December 20). The Post cites the bi-annual survey of television ministries by Stephen Winzenburg of Grand Valley College in Des Moines, which shows that self-promotion has fallen to 22 percent of televangelists on-air time this year. This figure is down from a high of 27 percent in 1988-- when the sex and money scandals were at their peak. Over the same period, the programs' spiritual content--such as sermons and testimonies of religious experiences-- rose to 74 percent of on-air time, up from 65 percent four years ago. Discussions of national politics--not a major theme for many TV preachers--slid to 4 percent of on-air time from 8 percent. Winzenburg says the latest statistics show televangelists are back to devoting the same amount of time to promotion as they did in the early 1980s before the scandals caused a large loss of money and viewers.

Another televangelist specialist, Quentin Schultze of Calvin College, says televangelists are also increasingly offering "premiums"--such as books and tapes-- in their direct appeals. "That's the major trend in evangelicalism

today. In the late 1970s, the trend was toward politicization. The trend today is toward consumerism," he says. Meanwhile, the presentation of religious shows on U.S. television networks are becoming few and far between, according to Baptists Today newspaper (November 26). Religious News Service writer David Anderson recently interviewed people in leadership positions in religious TV programming and heard the common complaint that both the networks and religious groups are facing new difficulties. ABC and NBC have recently decided to end production funding for religious TV shows, although both national networks say they will make TV time available for religious programming if faith groups come up with the funding. But such struggling efforts as the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission, which produces such shows as "Visions and Values," on ABC-TV and "Horizons of the Spirit," on NBC, are not finding much support from their member religious groups (made up of evangelical, mainline, Catholic and Jewish organizations), which are all suffering from recessionary losses in income. Foundations are not eager to pick up the economic slack either, reports Anderson. (Baptists Today, 222 East Lake Dr., Decatur, GA 30030)

## UPDATE ON NEW (AND NOT SO NEW) RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

\* The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, known as BCCI, made headlines for the scandals surrounding it, but New Age philosophy may also have played a large part in the bank's corruption and failure, according to the British journal Religion Today (Autumn/Winter). Paul Heelas writes that BCCI was founded by Pakistani financier Agha Hasan Abedi, a self-professed mystic, with specific New Age and Eastern religious values, such as the close identification of the self with divinity and distrust of outside sources of authority. Such a philosophy/theology was translated into BCCI's refusal to have fixed positions in the organizational tree and a formal chain of command, as well as its whole concept of "management by intuition." Heelas writes that while BCCI's "self religiosity" may have provided the motivation for the bank's rapid expansion, the New Age factor also played a key role in "bringing disaster." He adds that "Precisely because of the (relative) absence of formal controls and accountability systems, precisely because of the freedoms afforded by the use of intuition...it has been only too easy for managers to succumb to their 'base', that is utilitarian, drives." Up until Abedi's recent heart ailment [he is now reported to be in a coma], he was looking toward India in planning future New Age-based business ventures. (Religion Today, King's College London, Centre for New Religious Movements, Strand, London WC2R 2LS England)

\* The Jehovah's Witnesses are facing problems with succession and leadership which may soon lead to a doctrinal crisis in the group, according to the anti-cultist Christian Research Journal (Fall). David Reed writes that as the Witnesses president, Frederick W. Franz, approaches his 100th birthday and other leaders advance in age, "there is an obvious need for successors. But Witness doctrine excludes from eligibility 99.9 percent of the 10 million now attending Kingdom Halls. Leaders must come from among the 'heavenly class' of 144,000 'anointed ones' converted prior to 1935, when Watchtower president Judge Rutherford introduced [this] teaching...Of this number a mere 8,850 are still alive, and the vast majority of these are women-- another disqualification. That leaves perhaps 2,000 eligible men, most of them in their seventies or older-- a pool of potential successors with no greater vitality than the



sect's present leaders." Reed continues, "Thus the organization must either turn over leadership to men who are eligible but incompetent or change the rules of eligibility to permit younger, competent men to assume control. Since the claimed biblical basis for the sect's power structure rests entirely on the concept of 'anointed' leaders, major problems and major doctrinal changes can be expected as this 'remnant' of pre-1935 Witnesses continues to die off." (*Christian Research Journal*, P.O. Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693)

\* A controversial new religious movement is serving to divide several campuses, much as the groups known as "cults" did twenty years ago, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education (December 2). The controversy is the strongest in upper New York and Connecticut campuses concerning the presentation of an organized Buddhist meditation seminar led by Rama, formerly known as Frederick P. Lenz [see "On File" section in November/December supplement for more on Lenz]. The group has divided various campus leaders at SUNY at Purchase, Trinity and Wesleyan Colleges over how much to extend free speech and inquiry when it comes to religious beliefs and practice. Some Lenz-related activity has also turned up on the West Coast, especially at UCLA. What seems to be at the heart of the issue is whether the teachings of Rama are as subversive as such critics as the anti-cultist Cult Awareness Network claim, or as harmless as such knowledgeable observers of religion as John Raines of Temple University maintain.

Critics claim that the very fact the Rama seminars are so innocuous is what makes them so dangerous; they are viewed as "front groups" plying on students' vulnerabilities to become cultlike followers of Rama. Defenders insist all the sessions and materials are made public, the meetings are open to the general public, and thus no insidious recruitment is taking place. It is not clear in the programs just what the exact role of Rama really is. Supporters say he is only an inspirational figurehead, while opponents say he is out to build an empire of devoted followers, using Buddhist meditation as his means of gaining power. Further complicating the issue further is the question of whether state-supported colleges should rent their tax-supported facilities to an explicitly religious enterprise. At present, the colleges involved remain deeply divided among themselves over the extent to which they should allow lesser known religious groups to organize on campus.--By Erling Jorstad

## JEWISH PHILANTHROPY ON THE DOWNTURN, NONTRADITIONAL METHODS EMERGING

Traditional Jewish philanthropy, long a major source of Jewish identification, is suffering from a lack of generosity and loss of direction, writes Gerald B. Bubis in Moment magazine (December). For the past five decades Israel has been the centerpiece of Jewish fund-raising, but it has become increasingly difficult to rely on Israel as the basis of Jewish philanthropy, as many younger Jews have no longer reported a strong emotional attachment to the Jewish nation. Even such new causes as Operation Exodus--the special appeal to settle Soviet Jews--have only diverted funds from the regular fund-raising drives. There has been a 28 percent decline in Jewish giving to federations--the main fundraising channels--since 1971, after adjusting for inflation. As the costs of Jewish activities, such as education and synagogue membership have climbed, there is less to give to Jewish charity.

While Jewish fund-raising, like most charities, has relied on an elite of

"big givers," these Jewish professionals--especially the younger ones--"may be beginning to distance themselves from traditional premises of Jewish communal fund-raising." Of total households giving to Jewish charity, only one in five come from households of those younger than 35. Only two age groups--70 to 74-year-olds and those over 80--have a higher percentage of giving to Jewish charities than to non-Jewish charities. On a positive note, there is a "small but growing number of mega-foundations set up by a growing number of socially responsible mega-rich Jews. A significant number are wholly or partially dedicated to Jewish causes...Collectively, the 12 largest mega-foundations probably have more assets than all the federation foundations combined." Bubis adds that the declining federations have given little attention to strengthening Jewish life, and calls on these new foundations and "super-successful Jews in the arts, government, science and academia" to fill such a need. (Moment, 3000 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20008-2509)

## CURRENT RESEARCH: RECENT FINDINGS ON RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES

\* One significant reason behind liberal Protestantism's decline in numbers and influence may be the failure of parents to talk about their faith with their children, according to a recent study. In a survey of 721 United Church of Christ laity and clergy from Connecticut, Michigan, Pennsylvania and California, seminary student Tyson L. Frey found that 51 percent of the respondents said they discussed their Christian faith only occasionally with their children and 5 percent said they rarely discussed it. In a report in the United Church News (November), forty four percent said they discussed their faith a great deal with their children. "Some of the basic foundations of the faith are not being shared in the family setting," says Frey. On another survey question about titles used to describe Jesus, the number one answer was "savior," although responses varied according to region. California respondents preferred such images of Jesus as "prophet," "brother," or "servant," whereas Pennsylvanians "tend to use more traditional titles like Lord and God." (United Church News, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100)

\* According to a recent Gallup Poll, 48 percent of Catholics believe homosexuals should be eligible for the ministry, but a substantial majority of Protestants take the opposite view. The National Catholic Reporter (December 25) reports that the survey of 1,002 adults found that 37 percent of Protestants approved of homosexuals in the pulpit, compared to 57 percent who said they should be barred. Forty five percent of Catholics said gays should be barred. The survey did not distinguish between homosexual orientation and practice. Asked if homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative life-style, 44 percent of the Catholics answered yes, compared to just 31 percent of the Protestants. (National Catholic Reporter, P.O. Box 419281, Kansas City, MO 64141)

\* A new study shows that the steady decline in the number of men choosing to enter the Catholic priesthood may be slowing. The longitudinal study, published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, showed that the sharpest decline of priests took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Between 1987 and 1991, the overall drop in the number of graduate level seminarians (known as theologates, the last educational step before ordination) was 12 percent, down from 51 percent for the

1966-86 period. Among those studying to be diocesan priests, there was a decline from 1985 to 1990, and even a small--0.8 percent-- increase from 1990 to 1991 (from 1966 to 1991, college seminary enrollments had dropped 88 percent).

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND PLUS ORDAINED WOMEN EQUAL FRAGMENTED ANGLICANISM?

Most of the news accounts about the Church of England's decision to ordain women priests have focused on whether or not the dissenting Anglicans will go into schism (such as by joining the Roman Catholic Church). But there is also the question of what the decision means for the future of the Church of England and the Anglicanism in general. Britain's The Economist magazine (November 21) reports that approximately 3,000 conservative priests (out of a total of 10,000) are now considering whether to split away from the Church of England altogether. But these dissenting priests and other church leaders, who call themselves the "Cost of Conscience," have other options. Over the next 12-18 months, as the legislation goes through parliament and will have to receive royal approval, Anglicans can may leave the church for such bodies as the Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox or they may stay under an arrangement where dioceses (which are not required to ordain women) would appoint sub-bishops to minister to those opposing women clergy. "This looks uncomfortably like a church within a church; but it might avoid a more painful fracture," says the magazine. But if this measure is opposed by the House of Bishops, a more haphazard plan might be accepted where priests opposing women's ordination would go out of their jurisdiction seeking for guidance from a sympathetic bishop. "This bizarre and unstable development would destroy the ancient geographic pattern of dioceses, and set up a separate structure of bishops and priests," concludes the magazine.

Whatever course of action is taken, the decision to ordain women has created an irrevocable chasm between most traditionalists and the Anglican communion; many traditionalists from around the world have stayed on in their Anglican denominations because the Church of England, viewed as the mother church of Anglicanism, had not yet taken this liberalizing step. Already, a group of American traditionalists known as the Missionary Diocese of the Americas announced in late November that they were leaving the Episcopal Church because of this action. An editorial in the American traditionalist magazine The Christian Challenge (December) states that the "action in London created a counterfeit Church of England...Any reason for serious traditionalists to seek communion with or recognition from Canterbury is now gone." The editors view the move to ordain women as endangering "the use of the church's Cranmerian [or traditional] prayer book, for, perhaps rather tellingly, the advent of women priests seems to militate against the co-existence of a superior liturgy cherished by millions...The homosexual and inclusive language lobbies appear to be lined up in England right behind women due to become priests there, and following that could be such things as lay presidency (effective abolition of priesthood), nature/goddess worship, and universalism..." (*The Economist*, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020; *Christian Challenge*, 1215 Independence Ave., S.E., Washington, DC 20003)

## SHORT-TERM MISSIONARIES CHANGING MISSION FIELD

The continuing growth of short-term missionaries is likely to change the

traditional mission field, according to the Evangelical Missions Quarterly (October). Seth Barnes writes that "a new breed of missionary is being called to the field. Maybe she's a CPA who can afford a week's vacation overseas...The number of short-term personnel serving at least two months continues to be the fastest growing segment of the missions force. The 1988 total of 30,748 [short-termers] means that since 1985 there was an annual average growth rate of 13.2 percent. This is a significant increase from the 8.7 percent growth rate between 1980 and 1985. The career [or long-term] group was 57 percent of the total of overseas personnel in 1988 (down from 64 percent in 1985). Based on current trends, the number of short-term personnel will surpass those who are full-time sometime this year." Barnes adds that 22 percent of all Christian baby boomers have visited a Christian organization onsite overseas. Of these, nearly three-quarters are interested in short-term service.

Yet, the "missions establishment" still holds short-termers at arm's length. Currently, two-thirds of all missions agencies have no short-term missions program. Traditional missions organizations and leaders often claim that short-termers intrude with unintended consequences on to the missions field, or usually are untrained. Barnes writes that while this may be true of short-termers a few years ago, new models of short-term work have developed, such as STEM Ministries and Operation Mobilization, that have produced more satisfying results. "They do this by working directly through the local church. They prepare the short-term missionaries as thoroughly as they do the ministry sites on the field...They emphasize partnership with the national church and long-term missionaries," he adds. While others have criticized short-termers as producing little results, Barnes writes that more recent efforts have shown high rates of conversions, as well as increasing interest in missions at home. STEM Ministries surveyed its participants after they returned home from a recent assignment and found that both giving to and prayer for missions doubled after people went on a missions trip. (Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Box 794, Wheaton, IL 60184)

**CORRECTION:** An article in the September issue reported that Jack White was president of the National Association of Evangelicals; he is actually a former president of the NAE. It was reported that the NAE is starting formal discussions with Eastern Orthodox groups, but it should be noted that White only said, "I think it is time for us to begin some formal discussions."

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Inside This Issue:

- Reviewing Religion In 92
- New Age Banking And BCCI; Church of England's Fissures



# FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

## PRESS NOTES

January/February 1993

\* Joy is an unusual newsletter focusing on the experience of worship in the various world religions. The newsletter is published by the Jubilee Center, an organization that appears to be a kind of laboratory (or smorgasbord) for experimenting with and blending various forms of worship; recent events at the center included a Sufi Whirling Dervish ceremony, a Shaker dance, and an Aramaic Lord's Prayer retreat. The bi-monthly newsletter features accounts of such activities, as well as an interesting new column reviewing worship services. The idea of reviewing church and other congregational services much as one might review a restaurant or movie seems to be gaining appeal (The Christian Century magazine has recently started such a feature on prominent congregations, and Pittsburgh radio station WQED has had a show on church reviews, even rating a congregation's friendliness and music), but Joy's reviews focus more on the "spirit of the place" and how accessible it is for worship. The first review in the November issue is of Burlington, Vermont's Friends Meeting. A subscription is \$15 (\$25 for New England subscribers because it includes discounts for programs at the Jubilee Center) and can be obtained from: The Jubilee Center, 626 Centre St., Newton Corner, MA 02158.

\* The current issue of the esoteric-occult magazine Gnosis (Winter) is a good indication of the renewed attention given to the use of psychedelic drugs, such as LSD and Ecstasy, among those in the New Age/Eastern religious movements [see September RW for more on the trend]. The issue features articles by a wide spectrum of leaders and scholars of "alternative" spirituality, such as Roger Walsh, Jacob Needleman, and LSD pioneer Richard Alpert (known as Ram Dass), and sharp differences of opinion emerge among them. There appears to be three main viewpoints: those who oppose any use of chemical substances to achieve spiritual enlightenment; those who see such experiences as playing an introductory or "wake up" role for the spiritual seeker that eventually leads to a more "natural" spirituality; and those practitioners who derive most of their spirituality from drug use. Another article--hinting at a different kind of future church/state battle--argues that the U.S. government is engaging in a new form of religious persecution in its prosecution of drug experimenters, as it "establishes a preference for church- and word-based religions. It handicaps all experience-based religions...[Psychedelics] "enable us to take Protestantism a step further [giving people]...a direct experience of god, undistorted by church, belief, or revealed word." This issue costs \$4.95 and is available from: Gnosis, Box 14217, San Francisco, CA 94114-0217

\* The newly published Islam in North America: A Sourcebook (Edited by Michael Koszegi and J. Gordon Melton, Garland Publishing, 717 Fifth Ave., Suite 2500, New York, NY 10022. \$59) lives up to its title, as it provides a comprehensive guide to Islam's elusive yet growing presence in North America. The 415-page book emphasizes the diversity of Islam, covering such subjects and movements as Sunni and the less well-known American Shiite Muslims, the "heretical" Ahmadiyya movement, mystical Sufism, and the varieties of Black Muslims, and Christian-Muslim interactions (as well as carrying helpful bibliographies on all these topics). Especially noteworthy are Sulayman Nyang's survey of literature



on American Muslim history, movements, and organizations, and Koszegi's essay on the relation of Sufism to the New Age movement. Koszegi focuses on one Sufi organization, the Sufi Order in the West, and shows how the movement's stress on individualism, universalism, and non-authoritarianism fits in well with the New Age (and was instrumental in forming such New Age bastions as the Omega Institute). While some of this volume's articles are dated and its price is steep, the concluding 100-page directory of Islamic organizations and centers (said to be the most extensive recently published) gives the book added value for researchers.

## ON/FILE: A Survey of Groups, Movements and People Impacting Religion

1) The Communitarian Position Paper On The Family, a recently released statement attempting to address "family values" from a moderate perspective, is seeking support from a wider diversity of religious leaders than similar kinds of efforts. The 29-page position paper was drawn up by intellectuals associated with the communitarian movement, which attempts to form a link between public policy issues and moral values, while steering clear of positions associated with the religious right. The paper calls for U.S. President-elect Bill Clinton to adopt policies aimed at strengthening families, such as publicly funded paid leave for new parents, flex-time at work, better day care centers, and new divorce laws that would favor children and slow the "rush to divorce." The paper is being circulated to some 50 religious and civic groups as well as to the new administration. The communitarian movement, which is under the leadership of George Washington University political scientist Amitai Etzioni and the journal "The Responsive Community, is reported to have support from such diverse religious leaders as sociologist Robert Bellah, liberal theologian Harvey Cox, and neoconservative theologian Richard John Neuhaus. For information on the paper write: The Responsive Community, 2020 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20004 (Source: Christian News, November 30, and Religious News Service)

2) The recent founding of the Church Growth Institute shows how many fundamentalists are retailoring their ministries to appeal to the baby boom generation. The institute is based in Lynchburg, Va., and has as one of its prime consultants Elmer Towns, dean of the religion school at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. Towns has been the foremost proponent of the view among fundamentalists that conservative congregations will have to break out of their traditional style based on preaching, standard hymns and Sunday schools in order to reach the younger generations [see May 1990 RW]. The institute aims to explore baby boomer demands for worship, entertainment and family programming, and to help congregations meet such needs. (Source: Baptists Today, October 15)

3) The Mormon Alliance was recently formed to challenge the Mormon leadership on issues of human rights and "spiritual abuse." Organized by Mormon attorney and theologian Paul Toscano, the alliance is a response by liberal Mormons to counter recent attempts by the church's hierarchy to investigate and discipline dissenting members. The group plans to intervene in cases where members are being tried in disciplinary councils without due process, and it is considering drawing up a "Mormon Bill of Rights." The alliance also has a "Defense Project" which will defend the church and its leaders and members from "anti-Mormon libel, slander, and defamation." The Mormon Alliance's address is: P.O. Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121. (Source: Sunstone, August)