

RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

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RESEARCHERS LOOK FOR RELIGIOUS VITALITY IN OUT OF THE WAY PLACES

The recent joint conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association demonstrated how much the religious scene is in ferment-- including the field of religious research itself. The conference, held in Raleigh, N.C. from October 29-31, brought together about 450 scholars--mainly from the fields of sociology, religious studies, political science and psychology-- who presented and discussed a wide range of preliminary research on contemporary religion. As in previous years, there was a good deal of attention paid to such subjects as the evangelical movement, religion and politics, the baby boomer generation, and ethnic religion (such as black and hispanic churches and new immigrant faiths). But in keeping with the theme of the conference, "Deconstructing and Reinterpreting the Scientific Study of Religion," many of these topics were filtered through new "postmodern" approaches to studying religions that have gained acceptance at many universities.

While postmodernism is a diffuse and complex movement (especially since it applies to a wide range of subjects), the term was often used at the conference to mean that religion and the study of religion are becoming more fragmented and locally oriented and less able to address universal or even national themes (such as through large denominational structures, or grand theories of civil religion and secularization). Participants also referred to postmodernism as emphasizing religious experience over doctrine and rationalism. While postmodernism almost became a buzzword at the conference sessions, the new emphasis seems to have encouraged researchers to look for signs of religious renewal and social change in new places. For instance, in interviewing members of megachurches, Donald E. Miller, professor of religion at the University of Southern California, found that these evangelicals are more accepting of pluralism than others and "have given up the search for universal truth [for] truth at the individual level...their interests are local and particular." One person he interviewed summed up this philosophy with the words, "It's better to visit one person in need than to save all the whales in the world."

The megachurches are also being viewed as sources of social change. Brenda Brasher, also of USC, presented a paper reporting that womens' groups are flourishing in the growing networks of megachurches spreading around the U.S., such as Calvary Chapel and Hope Chapel. These groups provide social networks and influence among women in congregations that often do not allow them in positions of leadership, she says. These

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womens groups, or "cell clusters," often draw in women from surrounding smaller congregations where they are given an opportunity to discuss marriage and sexual issues without men present and to experience healing of the emotions. Brasher said that in her research she found that women in such large congregations often felt passive in attending church services and listening to sermons, and the cluster cells give them a chance to "integrate Bible stories with the stories of their own lives." Patricia Wittberg, professor of sociology at Indiana University in Indianapolis, presented preliminary research showing that Roman Catholic religious orders may not be headed for extinction, as new forms of ministry are emerging. She found that 75 to 125 new religious orders for men and women have been founded since 1985 (although she noted a few have been discontinued). One such order grew from 6 members to 30 in two years. These new orders are usually strongly conservative, often with large young adult representation, and they include such groups as the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and the Steubenville Franciscans in Ohio. Wittberg contrasted the new orders with pre-Vatican II and the declining post-Vatican II or liberal orders and found that the new groups often seek a different path from both types of institutions.

As with the pre-Vatican II traditional orders, the new orders emphasize wearing the habit rather than the secular dress prevalent among more liberal orders. The new orders also put more of an emphasis on living in "intentional communities" that are not cloistered away from society as were the traditional orders. The new groups emphasize spirituality and downplay the social activism found in liberal orders (although they usually live with and help the poor). While members of the new womens' orders are highly critical of the more feminist-oriented liberal orders, they also often exhibit "unexamined feminism." For instance, one woman she interviewed viewed herself as equal if not superior to the male leadership in running the order. Another woman said that her work in taking in abused women is "true feminism," since it is addressing the social ills of a "male culture."

Other conference sessions focused on trends in religious research itself. There were seminars on feminist, Latino, African-American, Christian and agnostic approaches and reinterpretations of the study of religion. Such postmodern approaches--called the "new paradigm"-- often sought to challenge the traditional ideals of scientific religious research, particularly the value of objectivity. David Roozen of Hartford Seminary told RELIGION WATCH that it is a "real time of tension between subjective, postmodern approaches and the more objective, scientific approach." While the subjectivist camp is gaining a greater voice in the scholarly community, the "vast majority" of academics involved in studying religion realize it would be a "tremendous loss" to discard scientific standards of objectivity, Roozen said. In a major address, Eileen Barker of the London School of Economics and recent president of the SSSR, was more blunt in her view of the matter, calling many of the postmodern approaches to religious research "just plain silly." Below are some more highlights from the conference:

* In a paper on the Christian Coalition, the organization started by televangelist and former presidential candidate Pat Robertson, Mark O'Keefe, religion reporter for the Virginia Pilot newspaper, says that the group may be able to "seize the real political power that the New Christian Right has not found yet." O'Keefe also saw the organization as moderating its strong conservative positions. The "stealth" tactics that the group advocated, such as not disclosing membership in the group in

order to infiltrate secular political groups, is "less of a factor" today. Pat Robertson's new book, "The Turning Tide," also shows that he has moderated his views, speaking more of "ethical than biblical values," says O'Keefe. Robertson is now being attacked as too moderate by others in the New Christian Right for the above positions. He adds that a new moderate form of the Christian Coalition may be used as a springboard for Robertson to make his bid for the 1996 presidential race.

* Hope College sociologists Roger Nemeth and Donald Luidens challenged the theory that financial support for mainline denominational structures in the U.S. is declining because church members oppose the "liberal policies" of church leaders. Instead, it is the need to compete for members which is forcing congregations to spend more of their income locally. The two researchers say that their study of church giving shows that those denominations that vest authority locally, such as the Baptists, have a competitive edge over those with more centralized and hierarchical structures. Because baby boomers are "consumers" of religion, shopping for specialized services and ministries, congregations have to compete more today, thus sending less money to headquarters, according to Nemeth and Luidens.

* There have been numerous studies showing that a segment of baby boomers have returned to religious institutions. But David Roozen of Hartford Seminary reported on recent research showing that many baby boomers may already be dropping out of religious involvement once their children get older and leave home. Roozen said that from surveys taken in 1990, it was shown that about 53 percent of baby boomers with pre-teen children attended churches. Baby boomers with "empty nests," (families without children living at home), dropped in their attendance levels to about 37 percent. He adds that the decline begins once children enter their teen years. While all generations of parents have shown lower church attendance levels once children leave home, the baby boomer decline is larger than previous generations. Such a development will contribute to a "downward trend" in church attendance for the next 20 years, according to Roozen. (For more information on the programs of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, write to: SSSR, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Purdue University, 1365 Stone Hall, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-1365)

NEW GENERATION OF PREACHERS GUIDING TELEVANGELISM IN 1990S

In the highly volatile world of televangelism, major changes have occurred across the several religious broadcasting networks and organizations in the last two years. Most visibly, the leadership of Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim Bakker has disappeared in light of financial irregularities, charges of sexual misconduct, and television overexposure burnout. Critics of televangelism suggested this departure could mark the demise of this form of ministry, but since 1991 a new generation of televangelist preachers has clearly come into the ascendancy, suggesting where electronic media ministry will be headed in the next four years. The new generation of televangelists are achieving prominence largely through the highly aggressive leadership of Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). Low power stations and smaller cable networks are being added in significant numbers as the viewing public seeks new faces and new directions. Most prominent here is the ministry of Benny Hinn, pastor of a 7,000 member congregation in Orlando, Florida. Within two years, mainly through his daily hour long program on TBN and first

four books (selling over 2 million copies) he has become the dominant new televangelist.

Most of Hinn's ministry focuses on faith healing, often with spectacular services for seekers at Orlando and in his many appearances across the nation. According to reports in the two most widely circulated Protestant magazines, Christianity Today (August 16) and Charisma (May and August issues), Hinn continues to be carefully scrutinized by conservative theologians for signs of deviation from orthodox teachings. To date, Hinn has admitted certain misjudgements in certain areas, especially on his emphasis on wealth, and he has reformulated his message. Other televangelists coming into their own recently have been Rod Parsley and Dwight Thompson, associated with energetic faith healing in their ministry of World Harvest Church, Columbus, Ohio. Certain African American televangelists now command wide audiences of whites and blacks alike, such as E.V. Hill, Carlton Pearson, and Frederick Price, all working out of Los Angeles and featured on TBN. One woman, Marilyn Hickey of Denver, receives wide support across the nation for her faith healing and teaching ministry. None of these televangelists had support during the late 1980s; all of them are now finding increasing viewership, especially with their focus on pentecostal-based healing services.

Beyond these leaders, a number of other televangelist preachers carry the message of healing and abundant living through TBN and independent stations. The health and wealth theme preached by Kenneth and Gloria Copeland contains little of the 80s political message but much on healing and successful pursuit of the gifts of this life. On a much different level, Jack Hayford of the Foursquare Church presents a popular, if subdued service of sustained teaching and congregational hymn singing each week on TBN. Mainline churches and the Roman Catholic Church have launched their own programs, with Vision International Satellite Network (VISN) and Eternal Word Network (EWN). Lacking substantial capital, they hold a loyal but comparatively small audience, writes media specialist Jeffrey Hadden in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (May). The American Christian Television System (ACTS), The Southern Baptist network, has not expanded beyond a limited circle of regional support. (Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60187; Charisma, 600 Rhinehart Rd., Lake Mary, FL 32746) -- By Erling Jorstad, RW contributing editor and a professor of History at St. Olaf College. Jorstad has recently written "Popular Religion in America: The Evangelical Voice" (Greenwood Press).

DENONINATIONAL FUTURE IN COALITIONS AND FLEXIBLE NETWORKS?

For the last decade, church leaders and observers have been forecasting drastic changes afoot in American denominations-- usually referring to a shift from centralized bureaucracies to decentralized structures [for instance, see cover story in November 92 RW]. So far, such a shift is not much in evidence, at least among mainline bodies. But sociologist Nancy Ammerman thinks the seeds of this trend may be found in the moderate movements surrounding the Southern Baptist Convention. Ammerman writes in the Christian Century (September 22-29) that the Alliance of Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which have sought to provide alternatives (such as in seminary education and publishing) to the reigning conservative leadership in the SBC, are becoming models of the "postmodern denomination." This is because these groups are not following the worn path of creating alternative structures which mirror those of

the SBC. Rather, they work through coalitions, subcontracting, and networks, and take advantage of new computer technology. The alliance functions as a "kind of think tank. It looks for people that need a voice and have needs that are going unmet...It has a tiny national staff and meets in an annual convocation for education and worship. There is no thought of becoming a 'full-service' denomination. Rather, it is a specialized organization with an identifiable niche, capable of forging alliances for the purpose of pursuing specific short-term goals."

Although the alliance has worked to publish alternative literature and has started a seminary, these initiatives have not come under control of the organization. The group has also been active forging links with other moderate and liberal Baptist groups (such as the American Baptists and the black Progressive National Baptists), but the goal is not merger with these groups but rather cooperation on common concerns. The CBF tends more in the direction of becoming an alternative denomination, but Ammerman says that the group still has the potential for being a model for new denominational forms because of its decentralized structure. The important thing about these groups is that they do not require congregations to leave the SBC to order to belong to them. Ammerman is convinced that as such models are viewed as successes, the new organizational forms will proliferate. Already, there appears to be similar thinking going on among conservative Christians. In the conservative Lutheran Forum magazine (Reformation issue), an "ecumenical confessing synod," is proposed where participating mainline congregations and individuals would network and cooperate with each other based around a new orthodox confession of faith, while remaining in their respective denominations, thus "treating the denominational machinery as lacking ecclesial density, as nothing more than a mechanism for pensions, charity and other temporal goods and services," says one article. (Christian Century, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60605; Lutheran Forum, P.O. Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753))

SCIENTOLOGY ACCELERATES RECRUITING AFTER LEGAL VICTORY

After a series of setbacks and criticisms in the media, the Church of Scientology is seeking to mend its public image with a major promotional campaign, according to the Wall Street Journal (October 20). The church, having recently won tax-exempt status after a decades-long struggle with the Internal Revenue Service, is now concentrating on expanding its recruiting efforts, say church officials. The expansion effort is starting with a new 590-page paperback book, "What is Scientology?," and a combative advertising blitz through television and print ads that seeks to rebut past media exposes of the organization (the most recent media attention has been an article in Premiere magazine about the religion's popularity and power in Hollywood). One communications expert says that taking out such ads is risky because they can backfire. "There's never been a company that's been attacked that didn't think it was unfair or untrue. The organization with the last word is the organization with the ink at its disposal." But public relations executive Bill Southard says Scientologists have received "so much editorial attention, and, from their perspective, been so misrepresented, that they don't have a heck of a lot to lose."

CHARISMATICS JOINING PILGRIMAGE TO SACRAMENTAL CHRISTIANITY

A segment of charismatics are now joining the long line of conservative Christians who have been making a "pilgrimage toward a deeper appreciation" of liturgical and sacramental forms of worship, according to the conservative ecumenical magazine Touchstone (Summer). Since the mid-1970s there has been a slow but steady movement of evangelicals to such historic liturgical churches as Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Eastern Orthodoxy. The magazine reports that "one [charismatic] Vineyard congregation in California joined the Eastern Orthodox church this summer, while earlier, a Vineyard charismatic fellowship joined the United Episcopal Church. There are some charismatic and other churches that have no formal connections with historic churches but have adopted the theology and liturgical practices of the historic churches, such as the Charismatic Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Orthodox Church.

Another sign of growing interest in liturgical Christianity among charismatics (who have long championed free-style church services) is the recent formation of an organization known as the Fellowship of St. Barnabas. The Oklahoma-based society is, according to its organizers, a "'brotherhood' of charismatic men and women who have been inspired by a rediscovery of these ancient roots and by a deep longing for unity with brothers and sisters in the whole Body of Christ." Some in the organization have joined Catholicism, Anglicanism or Catholicism, while others "have been networking with like-minded 'convergence' churches in various temporary 'communions' of churches on the same journey. And still others are simply integrating elements of sacramental theology and ancient forms of worship into their existing denominational or independent settings." (Touchstone, 3300 W. Cullom Ave., Chicago, IL 60618-1218)

SMALL CATHOLIC COLLEGES HARDEST HIT BY SECULARIZATION?

In the Catholic press--whether liberal or conservative-- one finds a growing concern that Catholic higher education is going the way of mainline Protestantism as it loses much of its religious identity. The focus has especially been on prominent Catholic universities, but concerns about survival as well as secularization have been most pressing for smaller Catholic colleges, according to the U.S. News & World Report (October 4). The smaller less well-endowed Catholic liberal arts colleges have had to depend on attracting non-Catholic students in order to survive (at least six such colleges have closed since 1986) more than Catholic universities with national reputations. Many Catholic schools design programs to attract mature part-time students without regard to religious affiliation. The result of such heavy outside recruiting is that Catholic colleges are increasingly deemphasizing their religious identities. Along with growing non-Catholic enrollments, incoming Catholic students are less sure of their church's teachings than previously; a survey conducted last year among students at 19 Jesuit-related schools found that 60 percent of the freshmen favored legalized abortion, up from 47 percent in 1988.

The decline in the number of priests and nuns on college faculties is also contributing to the difficulties in keeping Catholic identity at the forefront. For instance, the proportion of faculty at Catholic women's colleges who are nuns has dropped from 80 percent in 1975 to 20 percent today. A 1990 Vatican document requires that at least half of all faculty

at Catholic colleges be church members; the current proportion is 45 percent. In order to bolster Catholic identity at such schools, a new program funded by the Lilly Endowment works to recruit Catholic graduate students as potential faculty members. "But not every school is willing to ask the religious affiliation of applicants" or bypass exceptional non-Catholic prospects. Meanwhile, the Chronicle of Higher Education (October 13) reports that the new papal encyclical, "Veritatis Splendor," has caused Catholic college presidents and religion professors to wonder whether the church will increasingly try to turn the secularizing process around by way of imposing orthodox standards on academic pursuits. In the document, Pope John Paul II takes direct aim at theologians who are calling into question many of the long-standing church positions on moral doctrine. Across the country, as of yet, only a few professors have claimed the pope's position will in fact curtail academic freedom.
-- Erling Jorstad contributed to this report

MOUNTING TENSIONS OVER CATHOLICISM'S POWER IN EASTERN EUROPE

There appears to be growing fears and tensions over the role of the Catholic Church in politics in post-communist Eastern Europe, according to several reports. One of the most dramatic and surprising developments in Eastern European politics took place in September when voters in Poland returned their own ex-communist rulers to Parliament. In the National Catholic Register (October 17), Jonathan Luxmoore writes that beyond economic issues, the election of the former communists--who stood openly on an anti-church ticket--signals increasing Polish disenchantment with the political power of the Catholic Church. "Social research has consistently shown that society believes the church is too complacent and has been too 'political' in its championship of Catholic causes." Similar unrest is growing in Hungary, according to the Washington Post (September 30). "Hungary's center-right government, which according to opinion polls has the support of less than 20 percent of voters, has close ties to the church and wants to reestablish the old Catholic order of things. A controversial law permits the church to regain control of schools, hospitals and other properties that were confiscated by the communists." The church is becoming increasingly engaged in battles over taking back its institutions; when the church took over a school in one city, parents and teachers protested and started their own "pirate school."

Similar conflicts over the Catholic Church regaining properties are emerging in the Czech Republic. If the church was to regain all its former properties, it would become the country's largest landowners and landlords and it may have a negative effect on the privatization process, writes Jacques Poitras in the Christian Century (October 6). A recent poll found a majority of Czechs agree that enough property has been returned to the church, and that the church should no longer receive state support (although the church is not asking for any property owned by individuals and is not seeking financial compensation for property). The nation's Christian parties, which have close church ties, are also being criticized for claiming to represent most Christians and for not fully supporting church-state separation. But it is in Slovakia where most observers see the most extreme Catholic-government alliance. the Catholic Commonweal magazine (September 24) reports that "Scared by the inrush of Western materialism, Western sects, and Western theology, today the Slovak church appears to be trying to turn the clock back and insulate Catholics from what it regards as contamination."

The Catholic Church in Slovakia has historically been associated with the

suppression of the freedom of religion and other liberties, especially illustrated by Monsignor Jozef Tiso's attempt to create a theocratic Nazi puppet state during World War II. After forty years of communist rule, the church exists in a time warp with its nationalistic and pre-Vatican II identity intact. Slovak seminaries have refused gifts of theological books by German Catholics because of fear of Western influence. There are reports that the mental health of seminarians is being affected by the close observation they are subjected to by fellow students. On the political front, the "Slovak hierarchy and Christian political parties look back to Tiso as a role model and seem to want to recreate his theocracy in a materialist, socially disoriented, post-Communist society. Thus, the Catholic church in Slovakia, despite its high profile and the enthusiasm on which it can still draw, is now the least trusted institution in the country," writes Janice Broun. (National Catholic Register, 15760 Ventura Blvd., Suite 1201, Encino, CA 91436-3001; Commonweal, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038)

INCREASE IN VISITORS TO EUROPE'S SHRINES

As the summer travel season ends in Europe, Roman Catholic leaders note an unusually large increase in the number of persons visiting the healing shrines of the faith, according to the New York Times (October 12). While attendance at church continues to decline, large numbers of people are seeking healings and miracles at Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, and several lesser known shrines. Statistics at Lourdes, the world's best known shrine, show that in 1993 attendance was up 1.5 million more than in 1983. Equally large increases appear at the other sites located mainly in western Europe. Of special interest, are the large number of believers from former Iron Curtain countries. Observers are somewhat puzzled as to the reasons for this increase. Some attribute it to greater ease of travel, while others see it as nostalgia for an earlier, less confusing past. Other observers see the growth as a clear sign of coming major religious revival in a region long considered increasingly secular. Most watchers agree that the boom at the healing shrines is further evidence of the rapidly increasing preference of Christians for a more experiential, emotional form of religion expression than now exists in western Europe.-- By Erling Jorstad

CORRECTION: The volume number printed on the October issue is incorrect. The October issue was in volume 8 rather than volume 7.

Religion Watch

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— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

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PRESSNOTES

* In reading publications associated with the New Age movement, one finds increasing references to the sacred or spiritual aspects of sexuality. So it is not completely surprising to see the publication of the magazine Ecstasy: The Journal of Divine Eroticism. The glossy quarterly magazine covers the full range of religions and spiritualities that have sexual dimensions, such as Jungian teachings, Neopaganism and Eastern religions (a historic source of "sacred sexuality" for Western seekers); Judeo-Christian religions are mainly criticized for their "patriarchal" and "repressive" nature. Recent issues of Ecstasy feature articles on Hindu and Buddhist sexual teachings and practices, the pagan tradition of "sacred prostitution," and the occult and sexuality. A subscription is \$20 and is available from: Ecstasy, P.O. Box 862, Ojai, CA 93023.

* The summer issue of New Perspectives Quarterly is devoted to religion and its role in world order. The magazine (which has published several issues dealing with religion in the past) features in-depth articles on Islamic populism; the church in Poland; an interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski on the role of religion in strengthening the West; and an interview with church historian Martin Marty on fundamentalism. The issue costs \$12.50 and is available from: New Perspectives Quarterly, 10951 W. Pico Blvd., 2nd Fl., Los Angeles, CA 90064.

* Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media is an important new study exploring media coverage and lack of coverage of religious subjects. The 86-page report, conducted by veteran religion reporter John Dart and former Southern Baptist leader Jimmy Allen, is based on a study showing that there is a good deal of distrust between clergy and journalists, and that the press continues to fail to take religion seriously. The study, sponsored by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, also found that the nation's journalists are not as irreligious as previous studies have claimed. Aside from these findings (which have been reported in RW and the rest of the press), Bridging the Gap should be read for its extensive commentary on religion in the media, providing interviews with a wide range of journalists, scholars, and religious leaders. The report examines such topics as media coverage of Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and other world and new religions; television and religion coverage; and future directions in religion reporting. A complimentary copy can be received from: The Freedom Forum, Vanderbilt University, 1222 16th Ave., Nashville, TN 37212.

* One book that has served as a catalyst for renewed attention by the media and political leaders to the importance of religion in society is Stephen Carter's The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion (Basic Books, \$25). The book is attracting considerable attention for its attempt to avoid the extremes of the far right and far left activists in the ongoing debates on church/state

relations and religion and politics. A professor of law at Yale University, Carter finds much to praise in keeping specific elements of public religion in American life, yet disdains the attempts to "Christianize" its laws. This is a book worth reading carefully for its summary of the past and wise counsel for the future.--By Erling Jorstad.

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

1) The Black Bible Chronicles is the first translation of the first five books of the Old Testament into street slang. The translation, written by P.K. McCary, a Houston Bible studies teacher, hopes to reach young blacks, and also whites who have felt intimidated by traditional Bible versions. For instance, the translation rewords God telling Noah of the impending flood to read: "Man, I'm gonna blow the brothers clear outta the water." McCary says that much of the lingo is adopted from the way she talked in the 1970s. She adds it would be condescending for "a black women in my forties to try and write exactly the way young people in the 'hood talk' [although there is a more contemporary influence throughout the book]." The book, published by the African-American Family Press, is number 2 on the American Bookseller's Association African American Bestseller List, and some black churches and groups have started using it. McCary is planning sequels, including "Rapping About Jesus," which will translate the four gospels of the New Testament. McCary says, "When an 11-year-old girl tells me that the Serpent [who tempted Eve] reminds her of a crack dealer, something great is happening." (Source: Washington Post, October 9)

2) The Buddhist Women's Network attempts to bring together women from different Buddhist traditions from around the world. The network, which was founded last year, sees itself as providing open exchange among Buddhist women on their spiritual experiences, practices, and other common concerns. The group is unique because it is bringing Western (most converts) and Eastern Buddhists (including new immigrants in the U.S.) together-- two groups that have not had much contact with each other. The organization takes few political positions, but plans to engage in practical efforts of social concern. While the focus is obviously on women's concerns, the group steers clear of embracing a feminist identity due to the diversity of its participants, according to Yvonne Groseil, a leader of the group. A conference is planned for May in New York. For more information, write: Buddhist Women's Network, 1654 Third Ave., #2, New York, NY 10128. (Source: BWN Brochure; Interview with Yvonne Groseil)

3) While most of the media report increasing conflict and bloodshed between Muslims and militant Hindus in India, there are also unique new efforts at interreligious cooperation taking place. In the Indian city of Kanpur, the Friends Circle, a group of young Hindu and Muslim professionals, is trying to build bridges between the two groups. In Bombay, peace brigades of Muslims have formed which protest the interreligious violence in that city. Harvard University's Diana Eck says that such efforts take place "in one city after another. What is described as secularism [in India's press] is in fact the emergence of intercommunal, interreligious Hindu, Muslim and Sikh action groups." (Source: Harvard Divinity Bulletin, Vol. 22, #4; Wilson Quarterly, Autumn)