

RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

Volume 9 Number 5

March 1994

A DIVIDED NATION OF ISLAM FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

After a period of popularity among many whites and blacks and signs of a new acceptance from other religious groups, the Nation of Islam is now suffering from outside criticism, internal divisions, and uncertainty about its future in the black community, according to several reports. The Nation of Islam became the center of controversy recently when one of its spokesmen, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, delivered strongly anti-Jewish and anti-white speeches on college campuses. Although NOI leader Louis Farrakhan rebuked Muhammad for the tone of his speech and demoted him, he added that he supported some of his spokesman's views, such as that Jews run the Federal Reserve and had a prominent part in black slavery. The weekly newsmagazine *In These Times* (February 21) says that Farrakhan's ambivalent response to Muhammad's remarks was the "first public display of long-smoldering tensions" within the movement over leadership. There are subgroups within the NOI that claim a stricter fidelity to the doctrine of the "Messenger" Elijah Muhammad, the supreme authority of the group until his death in 1975, than Farrakhan. "Many of these groups argue that Farrakhan has mutilated the Messenger's teachings and thus is not fit for leadership," writes Salim Muwakkil.

Farrakhan's legitimacy within the NOI depends on his fidelity to doctrines teaching that white people are a race of devils and that blacks are an inherently divine people who will be rescued from the upcoming apocalypse by a "mothership," whose satellites have been confused as UFOs. While Farrakhan has endorsed these tenets before NOI audiences, he has downplayed them (especially teachings about "white devils") in recent years in order to broaden the movement's appeal in the black community. Unlike Farrakhan, Khalid Abdul Muhammad is respected even by NOI's hardliners; therefore it is "extremely important that the Farrakhan faction retain his allegiance... With one eye on the fundamentalist forces Muhammad represents and another on the Congressional Black Caucus and mainstream acceptance, Farrakhan has been walking a treacherous tightrope," Muwakkil writes. Although the media has minimized the NOI's influence, he adds that "much is at stake... The group's influence among young African Americans is singular; the NOI has been warmly embraced by the rap culture and many black college students."

The *Village Voice* (February 15) reports that while Farrakhan has attempted to patch up differences among black Muslims, such as with the American Muslim Mission (which has moved to mainstream Islam) and non-Islamic blacks, Muhammad has sought to sabotage such efforts; he delivered his much reported anti-Semitic speech in New Jersey on the heels of an historic engagement between Farrakhan and the Congressional Black Caucus, making such an alliance impossible. Writer Peter Noel predicts that Muhammad may eventually form his own organization.

There are conflicting signs about the future of the NOI. The group's

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 Phone: (516) 785-6765 (ISSN 0886 2141) Copyright © 1994 by Religion Watch.

reputation in the black civil rights community has suffered because of the recent controversies. Muhammad has been displaying a less abrasive stance lately (as shown in a recent uncontroversial speech he made in Trenton, N.J., where he denied any division in the group), but it may be difficult for him to forsake his "gangsta rap"-like views and rhetoric, which has won him a following among black youth. A possible factor in slowing the growth of the NOI is the new involvement of black churches in counteracting the programs of Farrakhan and other Muslim groups through holding seminars for church members on Islamic and NOI theology. Non-racial Muslim (and Christian) groups are also now taking on the self-help cause for which the NOI has gained admiration [see Jan./Feb. supplement]. The American Muslim Mission, whose leader Imam W. Deen Mohammed (the son of Elijah Mohammed) broke with Farrakhan on the racial issue, has become strong advocates of black business enterprise and schooling, according to the conservative black newsletter Issues & Views (Fall). The group sponsors a nationwide independent school system and works with other religious groups on neighborhood development and building projects. (In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647; Issues & Views, P.O. Box 467, New York, NY 10025)

**CHURCHES
OPEN DOORS TO
DIVORCE
PREVENTION**

While many churches have neglected to deal with the growing divorces under their roofs, there are signs that congregations and denominations are now dealing more openly and constructively with such issues, writes Michael McManus in Policy Review (Winter). Organized religion acts as a "blessing machine" that has no more impact on those getting married than a Justice of the Peace" -- even though three-fourths of all first marriages are blessed by clergy, 60 percent of new marriages are still failing. There are both theological and practical reasons for such ineffectiveness. McManus, who writes the syndicated "Ethics & Religion" column, reports that religious groups have increasingly either approved (has have some mainline bodies) or remained silent about couples engaging in premarital sex and living together; in surveying pastors of 16 denominations in four Southern cities, he found only one who ever preached a sermon on cohabitation. Such attitudes ignore mounting evidence that couples living together have a higher (as much as 50 percent) divorce rate than non-cohabiting couples, writes McManus. Too few churches take the task of premarital counseling seriously. Surveys show that fewer than one fifth of all marriages were preceded by any premarital counseling, and what was offered was ineffectual-- divorced and still-together couples are equally likely to have had counseling.

McManus writes that churches are now developing programs to prepare couples for marriage and prevent divorce, often with high rates of success. 100,000 couples a year complete PREPARE, a premarital evaluation developed by Lutheran psychologist David Olson. Most Catholic dioceses now require at least six months of marriage preparation, sponsor marriage encounters, and use mentors who provide guidance to newly married couples. In contrast, Protestants often have no minimum preparaton periods or mentoring. McManus says such differences show; the divorce rates in the heavily Baptist South are almost double that of the Catholic Northeast. He adds that evangelicals often have more of an impact on changing couples' behavior (such as in ending cohabitation) than Catholics. Taking off his journalists' hat, McManus himself has been promoting a "community marriage policy," where churches join together to set down minimum requirements for anyone wanting to be married. In cities across the U.S., these policies have been successful in preventing many

divorces; the divorce rate in Peoria, Illinois fell from 1,210 in 1991 to 947 in 1992. Last fall, Southern Baptists and Catholics even cooperated in creating community marriage policies in seven Southern cities. (Policy Review, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4999)

**ANTI-NEW AGE
ACTIVISTS
TARGETING
SCHOOLS**

A sharp conflict involving conservative Christian activists and the public schools is growing as parents successfully campaign against what they consider New Age and occult influences in educational programs and curricula. The evangelical newsweekly World (January 29) reports that "parents across the country are objecting-- and winning decisive victories" against such programs. In Marion County, Florida, parents recently got one curriculum removed from their schools and parents in other counties are following suit. Last summer, parent groups won a victory in Alabama when the state board of education passed a regulation prohibiting "New Age" practices in the public schools. There have been similar actions in New Mexico and Colorado. Self-esteem programs, such as those known as Quest, DUSO (Developing Understanding of Self and Others), and even the widely popular anti-drug program DARE, are the ones most frequently targeted. The Florida campaign was ignited when a mother learned that her second-grade daughter would be taught a self-esteem program where children would recite such slogans as, "I can handle it;" "I can make it happen;" and "I am me; I am enough."

While most programs have similar vague "feeling-oriented" themes, they can also involve "disassociative mental states, hypnosis, meditation, or yoga and fall under the broad category of "transpersonal education," says Craig Branch of the evangelical anti-cultist Watchman Fellowship. An in-depth article in New Age Journal (November/December) attempts to report on the issue in a fair manner and concludes that misunderstandings are found among both parties. Lynn Murray Willeford writes that most of the cases of parent protest against school programs are organized by a minority led by such outside Christian Right groups as Citizens For Excellence In Education. She adds that these groups exaggerate and distort many issues, often using such Christian Right tactics as electing activists to school boards. These campaigns have increasingly led free-speech and other educational groups to fight back. Supporters of these programs claim that any programs that use mythology (even books by Christian writer Madeleine L'Engle) have become targets in such anti-New Age campaigns. Willeford does not provide examples of New Age-alternative spirituality influence in the schools, but writes that too often the educational establishment has not attempted to explain new programs to parents and have not taken into account their traditional values and beliefs, often leaving them to "define [the new programs] in their own terms." (World, Box 2330, Asheville, NC 28802; New Age Journal, 42 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02172)

**ECO-SPIRITUALITY
FINDING WIDE
READERSHIP**

Once considered a spin-off from New Age religion, "eco-spirituality" is now finding wide acceptance among mainline believers and publishers. Publisher's Weekly (February 14) defines eco-spirituality as the "intimate relations of humans to the ultimate mysteries of the existent present in the natural world around us," and reports that such teachings are the subject of a growing number of books and conferences. In 1993, some 40 new titles appeared, most of which are selling well. The most eye-catching feature of the movement in early 1994 is its attractiveness to evangelical as well as mainline readers. As conservative a publisher

as Moody Press has a best-selling eco-spirituality title on the market, J.M.T. Miller's This Blue Planet: A Book of Praise. At the same time, a number of well researched books aimed at academic audiences and published by well known university presses are finding a readership. Observers such as Publisher's Weekly suggest that such new studies are making this heretofore rather esoteric field now more accessible and relevant to rank-and-file religious readers.— **By Erling Jorstad, RW contibuting editor and professor of History at St. Olaf College.**

**NEW MANUAL
SHOWS
PSYCHIATRY
WARMING TO
RELIGION**

Religious believers and seekers are increasingly being accepted by psychiatrists on their own terms rather than being viewed as having dysfunctional or deviant views and lifestyles. This change can be seen in the spate of new studies showing religion's beneficial effects on mental health, and in the forthcoming edition of the widely accepted source of medical psychiatric teaching, the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders," which presents a highly revised stance towards religious experiences. In contrast to the earlier traditional psychiatric view that religion is in essence a delusion, or evidence of immaturity, the new reference book which has long been considered a barometer of cultural change, states emphatically, with references to recent research, that religious experience is well within the boundaries of human mental health. In analyses in the New York Times (February 13) and the Minneapolis Star Tribune (February 11), it is noted that psychiatry has over the past two decades been drawn into sharp controversies over cults, charges of brainwashing, and alternative religious behavior. But now the APA is also showing similar acceptance and interest in alternative states of consciousness, peak experiences and meditation. The new manual states these experiences and practices may well have religious or spiritual origins rather than being evidence of mental illness.— **By Erling Jorstad.**

**TELEVISION
TURNS TO FAMILY
VALUES, RELIGION**

Television is increasingly airing programs and dramas that depict "traditional family values" and religious faith, according to the Long Island newspaper Sunday Newsday (February 27). Diane Werts writes that the popular series "L.A. Law," which now features a fundamentalist lawyer, is "just the tip of the iceberg." The programs include: "The Way Home," where churchgoing and lazy evenings supplant TV and video games; "704 Houser," Norman Lear's show about a black family who has deep, if differing, religious beliefs; a program this fall with Patty Duke as a contemporary minister in the Pacific Northwest; the drama "Christy," about a Quaker missionary; even the upstart Fox network recently ran a movie on former N.Y. Jet Dennis Byrd and how his faith helped him recover from a paralyzing football injury. Producer Michael Jacobs says that "Everything we're pitching this year...has to do with the fact that the country is sick of vast liberalism in family relationships." Werts points out that family value shows have not always succeeded (such as last season's "Against the Grain") and that it is still uncertain "whether viewers will embrace [such new shows'] sentiment and spirituality, or flee back to the familiar menu of silly and safe."

While it has mainly been conservative Christians who have charged that the entertainment media ridicule or do not portray them favorably, "freethinkers," such as atheists and agnostics, make similar claims of exclusion. Recent issues of the Newsletter of the Freethought Society of

Greater Philadelphia (December, January and February issues) have monitored television programming and found few favorable portrayals of atheists, agnostics and other freethinkers, although things are changing. Until recently the only TV character identified as a freethinker was the senator's daughter on the now-cancelled comedy, "The Powers That Be." That character "was portrayed as a neurotic, whining, hypochondriac, daddy's girl." But the last two seasons have shown freethinkers in a more favorable light. These shows include: "Law & Order," starring a district attorney who says she is an agnostic in a discussion of church-state issues; the British show "Waiting For God," where one resident of a nursing home pokes fun at the idea of an omnipotent God; "Northern Exposure," where general store owner Ruth Ann identified herself as an atheist; "Picket Fences," which features the sheriff's daughter saying she no longer believes in God, and another episode where the judge bans religious content from winter festivities in the schools and then church controversy ensues over a transexual playing the Virgin Mary in a play. (Freethought Soc. of Greater Philadelphia, P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242)

CURRENT RESEARCH *Recent Findings On Religious Behavior And Attitudes*

* The homeless are more likely to believe in God than other Americans, according to a recent survey. Attitudes on religion and other issues among the homeless are generally little known due to the fact that they don't have a home or address where they can be contacted for a scientific survey. The Gallup organization recently attempted to break through that barrier when they conducted on-site interviews (in both English and Spanish) with 655 homeless people in a 24 block-area of Los Angeles commonly known as "Skid Row." The Long Island Catholic (February 9) reports Gallup found that 96 percent of those surveyed said they believe in God. This is even higher than what is found among the general population, which is about 94 percent. The survey also found that three in four (77 percent) of the homeless say they go to a rescue mission or church to eat. The percentage is higher (83 percent) among those who have been homeless for less than a year.

* New studies on denominational switching and giving rates in churches suggest that the future of religious institutions may well be anything but robust. In a major study published in the Review of Religious Research (December), researchers C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long present data showing that many younger adults are not staying in the churches of their youth, nor are they switching to another denomination. The study shows that an increasing number have dropped out of organized religious life and show little sign of coming back. Hadaway and Long write that this development is due to vastly decreased general social pressure for persons to belong to a church, a pressure which has steadily declined since its zenith in the 1950s. Meanwhile, the National & International Religion Report (January 24) carries a report showing evangelicals as a whole have cut back from their financial support of congregations. In 1985, the giving rate averaged at 9 percent of a church member's income, while in 1991 the figure dropped to 4.9 percent. (Review of Religious Research, Marist Hall, Rm. 108, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064; National & International Religion Report, P.O. Box 21433, Roanoke, VA 24018)— By Erling Jorstad

* It has been stated many times that the baby boomer and baby buster

generations are different in their religious beliefs and practices from older generations. But Emerging Trends (February), the Gallup newsletter on religion, maintains that there is "nothing exceptional about the religious behavior of baby boomers. There simply are more of them and whatever they do for that reason alone is bound to have a considerable impact as they go through life." Gallup Polls throughout 1993 have suggested that boomers are "statistically unremarkable, mirroring the religious characteristics of the general population"-- church membership and attendance, religious preference, the importance of religion and other measures are all about the same. For instance, when asked if they attend church, 38 percent of baby boomers surveyed say they do, while 40 percent of all adults polled attend church.

As for baby busters, a comparison of the beliefs of young adults a decade ago and those of today finds little actual difference. The only significant difference between the generations concerns religious preference: "Protestantism, including both mainline and smaller denominations, has dropped four percentage points from 49 percent in 1973 to 45 percent" today, and Catholic and Jewish preferences have dropped slightly. The "other" category has risen during this period, which includes non-Judeo-Christian groups and most likely those eschewing Protestant-Catholic labels. [These findings seem to conflict with publicized studies of baby boomers and busters which portray them as reshapers of congregations and religious practice. But it should be noted that such studies examine more specific kinds of religious behavior, such as consumeristic attitudes toward the faith (such as "church shopping"), and levels of orthodoxy, commitment and community, that are not captured in the more broadly designed Gallup profile.] (Emerging Trends, 47 Hulfish St., Suite 215, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542)

* The continuing growth of militant Islam in the Middle East has strongly affected the region's level of interest and education in science, according to the sociological journal Society (November/December). Toby E. Huff writes that "Large numbers of Muslims today perceive modern science as 'un-Islamic' and those who embrace it are thought to have taken the first, and fatal, step toward impiety. Among Islamic fundamentalists, these sentiments are all the stronger, reinforced by ideological rhetoric identifying science with decadence and the 'evil of the West.'" Huff cites Iran as an example of how science and education may fare under an Islamic revolution. Iran's percentage of students sent to the U.S. to study has plummeted sharply. From ranking first in 1979, it has now plunged to fifteenth. The same is true for the Middle East as a whole. The number of Middle Eastern students sent to the United States dropped from 29 percent of all foreign students in 1979 to only 8 percent in 1990. (Society, Rutgers University, Bldg. 4051, New Brunswick, NJ 08903)

**CANADIANS
TAKING A
REGIONAL
APPROACH TO
RELIGION?**

As Canada moves increasingly to stress regional identity, Canadian Christian leaders and laity are likewise questioning the value of centralized denominational structures, according to Faith Today, (Jan./Feb.) a Canadian evangelical publication. The increasing regionalization of Canada was evident in the recent elections, where the populist Reform Party, which calls for greater self rule of western Canada, gained more influence, as well as in the continuing movement for Quebec's independence. The magazine says that "post-denominationalism" in Canada is present in two forms. Independent and non-denominational

congregations represent one such sector. Such churches are increasingly joining groups such as the Canadian Fellowship of Churches and Ministers, which act as loosely based networks taking on some denominational functions. Another form of post-denominationalism is present in the merging of churches often found among mainline Protestants in western and northern Canada. This can mean that a community of people from several different denominations worship together under one pastor, or that a minister of one denomination serves several different churches-- ranging from United Church to Lutheran.

Often these "shared ministries" serve as an "irritant" to denominations as they challenge taken-for-granted structures. They also demonstrate that people are tired of large, impersonal central bureaucracies, although not necessarily of all denominational structures. Don Poterski of the evangelical World Vision-Canada recently found in his research that 55 percent of active Protestants have switched denominations in their lifetimes [other researchers have found lower percentages], indicating the decreasing importance of denominations. He says that "there's pressure pushing people away from denominational loyalty and stability. The shift is from the national to the regional, just like the rest of Canada. The locus of loyalty is gravitating to the local level rather than the denominational." Rick Tobias of Toronto's Yonge Street Mission adds that the future of churches are in smaller groups. "There's not always the sense that denominations exist as servants of the local church and there's growing anger. It could lead to regional breakdown." The magazine suggests that if such splits take place, it might be something of a return to 17th-century Europe, when different regions--or countries--meant different denominations. (Faith Today, Box 8800, Stn. B, Willowdale, Ont., M2K 2R6 Canada)

**MISSION FORCE
EMERGING FROM
KOREANS, BRAZIL**

A "sudden influx" of Korean-American Christians interested in serving as missionaries is likely to reinvigorate the mission fields while also perpetuating traditional tensions, reports Christianity Today (February 7). Urbana 93, the annual gathering of missionary-minded young people sponsored by Intervarsity Fellowship, had the lowest attendance (17,000) since 1981, but nearly two-fifths of those attending represented ethnic minorities, an all-time high. More than 25 percent of those at Urbana had an Asian-American background, usually Korean. Observers viewed the enthusiasm about mission work among Koreans as a plus and minus: They are viewed as experts at planting churches, but "some fear Koreans may repeat the mistakes of some American missionaries in being culturally insensitive and failing to work closely enough with nationals [Christians native to the mission field]." Missions specialist Patrick Jounstone says Koreans "think they have the answer for the world because of the massive growth in Korea, but often they fall flat on their faces because the culture is so isolated." Koreans also put a big emphasis on numbers of conversions or congregation size, and view a lack of new Christians as failure.

Faith Kim, a Korean-American theology professor, adds that the strong Korean temperment may also cause problems on the mission field. "Koreans would like to mold everyone into their mold. They are likely to grab anyone they see, even in a foreign land, and ask, 'Are you a Christian? Would you like to go to church?'" There also is reported new interest and opportunities in missionizing Muslim lands, but, again, Europeans and Americans may not be the most likely candidates for such work. World

magazine (January 29) reports that the phenomenal growth of evangelical Christianity in Brazil is leading to a powerful missionary force in that nation. A 1992 study is cited showing that the number of missionaries sent from Brazil to other countries tripled in the previous five years. More than 40 foreign mission agencies send Brazilian evangelicals abroad. Missions specialist Luis Bush says that "Brazil is a social melting pot of many different races. There is almost a complete integration of society. Consequently, you can find people that look like and can relate to almost any country in the world. In addition, Brazilians are a vibrant and dynamic people. They are basically optimists. Their music and language is upbeat. They are typically well received in other countries...In particular, they are being very effective in the Muslim world, with great potential for expansion." (Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60187)

**WOMEN PRIESTS
DIVIDING HINDUS**

The recent ordination of [redacted] ad's first Hindu women priest has ignited controversy while also reflecting the changes and divisions taking place in Hinduism over the role of women in leadership. The ordination of Indrani Rampersad as a priest in the Arya Samaj Hindu movement brought criticisms from orthodox Hindu groups claiming that Hinduism does not permit such a role for women, according to Hinduism Today newspaper (February). The Arya Samaj, a movement seeking to reform Hinduism and promote equality of gender and race, claims that the Hindu Vedas, or scriptures, permit women priests. The movement has also ordained women priests in South Africa, North America, India, and other parts of Asia. It is not so much the push for equality among Hindu women that has led to the growing numbers of ordinations as much as cases where men are unable to meet the community's needs or are said to not be performing their religious duties with the proper devotion. The newspaper adds that even in more orthodox groups, women are "coming forward wherever there is a need," often with the local Hindu community's blessings. In Sydney, Australia, for instance, when a priest was sent back to India after his visa expired, permission was given to develop a "new lay priesthood" in his place, and three women were permitted to perform religious rites (pujas) during weekdays. (Hinduism Today, 1819 Second St., Concord, CA 94519)

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



Inside This Issue:

- *The Nation of Islam's Future in the Black Community*
- *TV More Favorable Toward Believers Than Freethinkers?*

FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

March/April 1994

PRESSNOTES

* The evangelical satire magazine The Door devotes some serious attention to the megachurch phenomenon in its January/February issue. The magazine carries interviews with both critics and proponents of the movement, such as John Seel, John Vaughan and Bill Hybels, pastor of the pioneer megachurch Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago. The Door doesn't miss the opportunity to inject some humor into its coverage of the movement throughout the issue. For more information, write to: The Door, 1224 Greenfield Dr., El Cajon, CA 92021.

* The December and January issues of the Millennial Prophecy Report digests a wide number of accounts and analyses of the Branch Davidian-Waco tragedy from across the religious and political spectrum. The December issue focuses on how political and religious groups often viewed Waco through the lens of their own particular beliefs and agendas. Anti-cultist organizations saw Waco as confirming the danger of authoritarian religion, while far rightists saw Waco as bolstering their conspiracy theories about the government. The January issue looks at responses from the academic world, which are often critical of the government's actions and somewhat sympathetic toward the Davidians. The issue concludes with a reprint of an article by David Koresh on his interpretation of the "seven seals" in the book of Revelation. For information on the cost of the two issues (running to a total of 35 pages), write to: Millennium Watch Institute, P.O. Box 34021, Philadelphia, PA 19101-4021.

* While statistics provide important information about religious movements, personal accounts of commitment and conversion from members of such groups can often give readers the human element behind many trends. The new book American Jihad: Islam After Malcolm X (Doubleday, \$25) by Steven Barboza, lets American Muslims tell their own stories about how they came to the faith or maintained their Islamic beliefs since coming to the U.S. Through his interviews, Barboza, himself a Muslim, compiles a diverse portrait of Islamic America: Members and leaders of the Nation of Islam and other black-oriented Muslim groups; Muslim immigrants; Western intellectuals drawn to mystical Sufi Islam; other converts drawn from a wide range of religious backgrounds; and famous people who have converted, such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Muhammad Ali.

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

1) Together Net is emerging as a prominent interfaith computer network. The network, operated from Vermont, has mainly been devoted to human rights and environmental concerns, but now is organizing computer conferencing groups among various religious groups. Together Net was the

official computer network at last year's World Parliament of Religions in Chicago; it is currently attempting to link together all of the parliament's spiritual leaders. The network, costing several million dollars, is funded by the Together Foundation for Global Unity, a group started by Venezuelan visionary Ella Cisneros to connect people as a "unified harmonious force to solve problems." The network's address is: Together Net, 130 South Willard St., Burlington, VT 05401 (Source: Hinduism Today, January)

2) Hindu University of America is the first such higher learning institution based on Hindu thought in the United States. The Orlando, Fla.-based university offers "moral and spiritual courses." and plans to offer degrees in Hindu studies at both the masters and doctoral levels. (Source: Hinduism Today, February)

3) The Thessalonian Apostolic Movement is a different kind of evangelical movement in Greece that is growing in an often inhospitable climate. The group, which is connected with the U.S.-based Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel (AMG International), does not encourage Greeks to leave the Orthodox Church as have many other evangelical mission groups. Instead the group uses Orthodox symbols and practices (such as crossing oneself), and often refers to the church fathers in its services. A key part of the ministry's strategy revolves around home fellowships or cell groups, some of which keep close ties to the Orthodox Church. The new movement is criticized both by other Greek evangelicals and Orthodox officials who have called it heretical. (Source: Charisma, January)

4) The work of the PreTrib Study Group and the plans to establish a PreTrib Research Center shows the growing interest in the end times among evangelicals as the Third Millennium approaches. The study group, chaired by former New Christian Right pastor Tim LaHaye, recently brought together 65 specialists in its second annual meeting to explore the teachings of Christ's return. At its conclusion, the scholars pondered that the coming of 2,000 A.D. may be the end of the world, and proposed the establishment of the PreTrib Research Center. The center, which will be headed by LaHaye, will serve as a think tank on prophetic studies, promoting the pre-tribulationist position (that Christ will return before the tribulation) through publications and conferences. (Source: National & International Religion Report, January 10; Christian World Report, February)-- By Erling Jorstad.

5) The growing influence of the Word/Faith movement among evangelicals is evident in the popularity of the Faith/Word Biblical Reference Bible. The reference work is an annotated Bible by Finis Jennings Drake first published over 30 years ago and now enjoying a resurgence. One reason for its popularity among today's charismatics is that the revised Bible is endorsed by such noted televangelists as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, and Kenneth Hagin. Conservative evangelical scholars say that the work contains many logical inconsistencies as well as covert racist commentaries. They insist the author, a one time traveling revivalist, has little scholarly training in the basics of scriptural interpretation. However, the book continues to sell well, illustrating another area of controversy in the highly emotional struggle within contemporary evangelicalism for leadership and influence. (Source: Christianity Today, January 10, 1993)-- By Erling Jorstad.