

RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 7

MAY 1994

HISPANIC CATHOLICS ADOPTING NEW STRATEGIES TO KEEP FLOCK

While disaffected Hispanic Catholics continue to migrate to evangelical Protestantism, there are signs that the Catholic Church is taking some lessons from the evangelicals and developing new strategies in meeting the needs of the changing Hispanic population in the U.S. In the Jesuit magazine *America* (April 23), Hispanic specialist Allan Figueroa Deck writes that new research on the evangelical growth among Hispanics both in the U.S. and in Latin America has convinced Catholic leaders that the long-time political approach taken toward this group--such as in forming the social activist "basic communities"-- is not working. Currently there is more of an attempt to establish a connection between faith and social justice that "respects the people's sensibilities and experiences." A new awareness of the wide range of cultures and social classes among today's Hispanics is showing that the former emphasis on an "undifferentiated 'option for the poor' on the part of ministers can be interpreted as exclusivist, leading Hispanics who happen to be upwardly mobile to regard themselves as outside the church's concerns." The focus on Hispanics' more recent social and economic mobility is also revealing the inadequacy of the "urban underclass analogy" often applied to Hispanics by church workers.

But, more than any other trend, it is the emergence of a new wave of Hispanic Catholic theologians, activists and organizations that is changing the nature of Catholic Hispanic ministry. These include: an active and growing Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians; 1993 saw the founding of the *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*; a continuing boom of Hispanic theological work, including contributions by Hispanic women theologians such as Ana Maria Diaz Stevens and Rosa Maria Icaza; "thousands of Hispanic faithful are sharpening their pastoral skills. They have been exposed to Saul Alinsky-style community organizing based in parishes, an especially effective form of leadership development"; the number of Hispanic priests and seminarians are rising, notably in Texas and California; the formation of the National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry and other Hispanic organizations independent of the church hierarchy-- something inconceivable a few years ago. Deck concludes that a "new generation of Hispanics do not look first to the church or other institutions, but to themselves, to the family and the local community. The idea that having Hispanic bishops in and of itself would provide a solution for Hispanic 'problems' is being left behind."

How will the second generation of Hispanic-Americans fit into the above scenario of religious life? Young Hispanic-Americans exhibit a "strong anti-institutional sentiment... On just about every possible indicator, we find that the younger the population, the weaker the Catholic belief and

the lower the level of Catholic practice," writes sociologists Christel Manning and Wade Clark Roof in Social Compass (March), an international journal on the sociology of religion. It is noted that individual religious practices, such as saying the rosary, and house blessings, "have declined significantly for the second generation (from about 10 to 20 percent from the first to second generation)." Even folk customs, such as the use of charms and mediums, are less popular among this group. A study of graduates from a Catholic high school in New Mexico by sociologist Patrick McNamara shows young Hispanics are becoming like their Anglo counterparts in that they "increasingly select from their religious tradition what they wish to believe and practice." Manning and Roof see a somewhat divided religious future for second generation Hispanics. Those entering the middle class are becoming more individualistic and assimilated in their attitudes. But "popular Catholicism," with its many folk traditions from different Hispanic cultures often existing under the same parish roof, still holds sway among young working class Hispanics. The article adds that, "...driven by the new ideologies of cultural pride, immigrants in multicultural parishes learn from one another and find strength in their common goals... We might reasonably expect greater mobilization around Hispanic cultural and religious ideals in the years ahead." (America, 106 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019; Social Compass, Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill St., London EC2N 4PU England)

***SPIRITUALITY
GROWS IN
WORKPLACE
THROUGH
STEWARDSHIP***

The principle of stewardship is gradually finding its way into the American corporate world, according to the National Catholic Reporter (April 8). Stewardship is a broad principle that can mean anything from religious concern for the environment to managing one's finances with accountability. The stewardship movement growing among business managers today is based on the principle that one does not own anything and that lives should be devoted to higher principles, causes and purposes. William Bole writes that the designer of the new stewardship movement is Peter Block, an influential consultant with such firms as AT&T and World Bank. Block teaches the idea that managers hold companies in trust for the good of all employees, thereby giving everyone a stake in the business. What does religion have to do with all this? Block says he formulated his notion of stewardship from the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber and Mahatma Gandhi, who spoke of "trusteeship" or service, as the basis for holding power. Block says that stewardship means the powerful are called to help others find "meaning, purpose and spirit" in their work.

Block adds that it is a misconception that one can be "spiritual in the evening and economic during the day." Those are the kind of statements that have bothered some leaders in the management field. Victor Vroom of Yale University says that while most management experts agree with Block and other consultants that power-sharing can boost productivity, he criticizes them for mixing "distinctly humanistic and spiritual elements" into the science of management. Nevertheless, stewardship seminars led by Block and other groups such as the Covey Leadership Center in Provo, Utah, are drawing clients from the major American corporations (as well as from Catholic parishes, who find the idea of lay trusteeship appealing) to their blend of spiritual growth and employee "empowerment." Another popular theme in the management field today that has strong religious overtones is "servant leadership." The concept was introduced

in the 1970s by Quaker businessman Robert Greenleaf in his book "Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness, published by Catholic Paulist Press. Servant leadership is finding a hearing today because of its call for a "new ethic" teaching that businesses exist as much to provide meaningful work for people as to provide a service or product. (National Catholic Reporter, P.O. Box 419281, Kansas City, 64141-6281)

**WHITE-BLACK
PENTECOSTAL
UNITY GROWING**

The divisions that have historically marked white and black Pentecostal relations are being addressed by a new effort toward unity between the two traditions. Although Pentecostalism started as an interracial movement in the early 20th century, white and black churches have had little to do with each other in the intervening years. But now the largely white Pentecostal Fellowship of America, which counts such denominations as the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Church among its members, is disbanding and by 1995 will reorganize to include black churches, such as the fast-growing Church of God in Christ (with 5.5 million members). The first formal steps were taken in December in Atlanta with a statement that the Pentecostal witness would be "authenticated and validated" by such a merger. According to a report in Christianity Today (April 25), the broadening of Pentecostal unity is taking place because of the recent growth in black ministries and the realization that such cooperation is necessary in the difficult task of inner-city ministry. The new fellowship plans to facilitate joint work in urban ministry, bring fresh energy and resources to the national Pentecostal vision and identify new areas of outreach for the years ahead. (Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60187).
By Erling Jorstad, RW Contributing Editor.

**RELIGIOUS
PRESENCE GROWS
IN MENTAL HEALTH
INSTITUTION**

As psychiatry has changed its views on religious beliefs, claiming that they are not a hindrance and may even be of benefit to mental health [see March RW], such new approval is increasingly evident in clinical practice. Ministries in mental health institutions have "gained increasing respect as clinicians have recognized the spiritual in treating mentally disabled or mentally ill patients," reports the Kansas City Star (March 26). But the new appreciation of religion has extended beyond chaplains working in hospitals. "Institutional clergy now work with outside agencies and with local congregations, helping clients adjust once they leave institutional settings," writes Kristin Holmes. The trend began as the movement to de-institutionalize people has continued over the years. "If a person moves out and into a town, will a church be accepting? Patients have problems when they leave. The image I have is of a former mental patient who is still not quite together who walks into a church and doesn't quite fit," says one chaplain. Holmes cites the example of the Woodhaven Center in Northeast Philadelphia, where services are held that combine the spiritual with the educational to prepare clients for the day they reenter the community.

**CHURCHES TURN
TO HUMOR AS
TEACHING TOOL**

There is a new generation of clergy and theologians who are using humor as a tool for evangelism, teaching and worship, according to the Los Angeles Times (March 26). Churches are trying to cheer up the somber atmospheres and styles that have surrounded many churches. "Jokes and cartoons have become common in religious bulletins, as an increasing number of clergy loosen up their congregations with funny stories... The

Fellowship of Merry Christians, founded in 1986 with 250 members, now has 10,000.... The move to a more celebratory faith focusing on joy and fueled by humor is not based solely on theological grounds. Fear of losing generations of baby boomers and baby busters who find the church boring-- along with research into the physical and mental benefits of laughter-- are also persuading religious leaders to lighten up," the article says.

CURRENT RESEARCH *Recent Findings On Religious Behavior and Attitudes*

* With the current rate of assimilation and intermarriage among American Jews, it has become almost an accepted view that the grandchildren of intermarried couples will not be Jewish at all. Such a view, however, has everything going for it but the facts, writes sociologist Egon Mayer in the Jewish magazine Moment (April). Mayer writes that the much cited idea of the loss of the third generation of Jews from intermarriage came from a single 1984 study of the Jewish population in greater Philadelphia. The study found that of the 1,424 respondents, only 63 were children of intermarried couples, and of this group, 13 were themselves intermarried and raising children. The study found that these 13 did not consider themselves of the Jewish religion. But there was less attention paid to the fact that some of the other 50 children of "intermarrieds" had married Jewish partners and were raising Jewish children.

Mayer adds that the Philadelphia survey only asked the respondents' religion, not whether they considered themselves of Jewish ethnicity-- a far more common source of identification among American Jews. Mayer concludes that while intermarriage poses an unprecedented challenge to the Jewish future, it is unwise to write off the third generation of intermarrieds since they "often think of themselves as Jewish and engage in activities that are significant to their own sense of a Jewish identity. Even some who identify their children as Christian nevertheless engage in Jewish observances that undoubtedly impart at least some message of Jewish identification to their children." (Moment, 3000 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008-2509)

* A recent poll of predominantly conservative Protestant married men finds that sexual satisfaction and a religious upbringing are correlated "more positively than negatively." The poll, conducted mostly on clergy by researcher Archibald Hart of the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, found that those raised in strongly Christian homes were more likely to report "excellent" sex lives (31 percent) compared to those who had no religious upbringing (20 percent). The National & International Religion Report (April 18) cites the survey as also showing that 80 percent of the respondents said their faith increased their respect for women and their understanding of the role of sex in life; fewer than one percent said their religion distorted their sexuality. Another recent survey by the conservative Family Research Council echoes the above finding in showing that 72 percent of married "traditionalists" (those who believe that sex should be reserved for marriage) report a high rate of sexual satisfaction, according to a report in First Things magazine (May). That is 31 percent higher than unmarried "nontraditionalists" (those taking a more casual view of sex outside of marriage) and 13 percent higher than married nontraditionalists.

FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

May/June 1994

PRESSNOTES

* Recent issues of the fledgling magazine Prism shows how the evangelical left has lately been expanding its agenda to include such issues as pro-life activism, environmentalism, and inner-city community development, along with more familiar causes as peacemaking and social justice. The monthly magazine, which is published by Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA), sees itself as representing a new movement of social concern that transcends left and right positions; the publication has so far drawn together evangelicals representing a wide range of social and theological views-- charismatic Vineyard Ministries founder John Wimber, black self-help activist John Perkins, Ted Engstrom of World Vision and evangelical left pioneer Jim Wallis of Sojourners. Along with coverage of social issues, the magazine critiques popular culture through music and film reviews. A subscription comes with the \$25 membership in the ESA. Send to: Prism, 10 Lancaster Ave., Wynnewood, PA 19096)

* The spring issue of Dialog, a Lutheran theology journal (Spring), features two opposing articles on sexuality that go a long way in explaining why conflicts in mainline denominations on such issues often end up at an impasse. In one article, social ethicist Carol S. Robb calls for a new sexual ethic based on: equal power in relationships; "sex role fluidity; pluriform sexual relations," which would include homosexual and non-married sexuality; and "procreative rights." What is noteworthy about the article is that Robb maps out what she calls the "progressive sexual ethic" movement, describing its key thinkers, such as James Nelson of United Theological Seminary, and states that its positions are closely related to the controversial sexuality statements issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA). In another article, theologian James Burtness writes that it is difficult to respond to Robb's views because they are based on a different worldview and system of morality from those of most traditional Christians. As a result, both parties continue to speak past one another. The issue costs \$6 and is available from: Dialog, 2481 Como Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108.

* During the past few years a "cyberpunk" counterculture has emerged mixing computer technology with New Age-oriented mysticism. The new book Cyberia: Life In The Trenches Of Hyperspace (Harper Collins, \$22) by Douglas Rushkoff, examines the various aspects of this diffuse movement, such as computer generated virtual reality; new designer and natural hallucinogenic drugs; computer networking; role-playing games; neopagan magic; the "rave" dance events now popular in the U.S. and Europe; and experimental art and fiction using computers. In attempting to tie all of this together, Rushkoff concludes that spirituality plays a big part in the movement, as proponents believe that everyday or "consensus" reality is arbitrary (computer-generated "realities" can be just as real); that "all is one," and that the earth is divine and self-sustaining (similar to the "Gaia" hypothesis); and that one can escape time and enter the "end

of history" through experiences of "bliss," such as through rave ritual dancing and drugs. If understanding these concepts seems difficult, readers should be advised that Cyberia makes it only harder by its use of dense computer terminology to describe most facets of everyday life.

* Religion Watch always welcomes clippings from newspapers and other publications documenting religious trends. While we cannot personally acknowledge every item received, two contributors deserve special mention for their clipping efforts. RW wishes to thank Serena Chin and Martin Morse Wooster for sending in a steady flow of religion articles culled from newspapers and other periodicals. Our offer still stands: If readers send in articles (whether from religious or secular publications) which report on long-range developments in religion, and if we use them, we will extend subscriptions to RW for two issues. Remember to mention your name and address when sending us clips.

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

1) The Association of Christian Therapists (ACT) has evolved from being a charismatic Catholic group attempting to bring the healing ministry to the church to a broad-based professional association that has assumed a prominent part in the holistic health movement. ACT, which now has 2,000 members worldwide consisting of physicians, mental health experts, clergy and social workers, has become "mainstream" due to new medical research showing the beneficial health effects of spirituality and prayer. ACT has also moved away from the more conservative aspects of the charismatic movement in its 18-year history. The group has avoided pitting prayer against psychotherapy and at least some of the members seem to be influenced by Jungian teachings. One center of this Catholic holistic movement is Trinity College of Graduate Studies in Oceanside, Calif., which seeks to integrate "Christ's healing power, psychotherapeutic theory and social justice." (Source: National Catholic Reporter, April 15)

2) Youth Theology Institute attempts to introduce its teenage participants to in-depth theological discourse and study that is often not found on the local church level. The four-week summer institute based at Emory University in Atlanta is said to be an experience "somewhere between church camp and college classes" for teens from over a dozen denominations. Theological activities can range from a discussion of the Danish film "Babette's Feast," to studying the writings of theologian Paul Tillich. The Institute also requires teens to work on service projects in the wider community and to be involved in church life. (Source: Initiatives In Religion, Winter)

3) Church of the New Jerusalem is a new native-born nationalist religion in Romania that is said to have the good deal of exposure in the nation's mass media. The church follows the teachings of the late "Prophetess Virginia," an illiterate peasant woman who claims to have predicted the fall of the Romanian dictator Ceausescu. The focal point of the movement is a church built according to the prophetess' instructions in a small town called Pucioasa near Bucharest. Tended by a monastic group consisting of seven men and seven women, the church is seen as the "altar" of the "Great Church," which is Romania itself. A central tenet of the church is the belief that "the peoples of the world will worship the New Jerusalem born in Romania" under the rule of former Romanian King Michael. (Source: Gnosis, Spring)

(National & International Religion Report, P. O. Box 21433, Roanoke, VA 24018; First Things, 156 Fifth Ave., Suite 400, New York, NY 10010)

* The overall state of religion in America is at the lowest ebb ever recorded, according to a recent Gallup study. The Gallup-based Princeton Religion Research Center issues a yearly religion index that measures the strength of eight key religious beliefs and practices among the American public, including belief in God, confidence in religion, church and clergy; and church membership levels. Emerging Trends (March), the Princeton's center newsletter, reports that the index stands at 649-- a slight decline since the previous year when it was 653-- the lowest mark ever recorded (1000 would be the highest score possible). The downward trend began in the 1980s, although it reversed itself in 1991 and 1992 before last year's decline. The areas of the index that have showed the most decline include confidence in the church or "organized religion" (dropping from 66 percent having a "great deal" of confidence in 1985 to 53 percent in 1993 and in the clergy (declining from 67 percent in 1985 to 52 percent today). The newsletter adds that "Paradoxically, the importance that people attach to religion has been rising, and so has their identification with specific faiths and denominations." (Emerging Trends, 47 Hulfish St., Suite 215, P. O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542)

* Late last year a survey was released which suggested that a significant religious revival was taking place in Russia and other Eastern European countries [see January RW]. The study, part of the International Social Survey Program, found that church attendance in Hungary had tripled between 1985 and 1991, and that young Russians identifying with the Orthodox Church had jumped from nine percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 1991. Slovenia and East Germany were unique among Eastern European countries in being uninfluenced by this trend. Sociologist Andrew Greeley worked on the survey and thinks that such an upsurge has more to do with the staying power of traditional religions in the region than the upsurge of evangelistic activity in wake of the fall of communism. In an interview in The Public Perspective (March/April), a journal on public opinion and polling, Greeley interprets the findings to mean that "While there have been some evangelistic ministries in Russia, they are very limited. We have a sample of almost 3,000 Russian respondents, and those whose religious conversion stems from an experience at a revival meeting don't show up in the sample. The evangelists get some publicity in the U.S., but in Russia their impact is minimal."

Greeley says that religion in Russia was merely dormant and that the rich Russian Orthodox traditions have a lot to do with the faith's revival. Orthodoxy "has art, music, architecture, monasteries, stories with saints and mysticism-- and all of these things a thousand years old and more. It is not the kind of cultural heritage that you can stamp out easily... Orthodoxy had all the things that the Reformation didn't like about religious heritage. Eastern Germany was overwhelmingly Evangelical (or Lutheran) and lacked the strength of tradition to keep religion alive through the super dark years. In Hungary you had a strong tradition-- perhaps not nearly as vigorous as in Poland but still alive and able because of its imagery and experiences to survive." Because religious faith is increasing among the younger generation-- usually the least religious age group-- in all of the four countries studied, "there's reason to suspect real social change [is] going on," Greeley adds. (The

Public Perspective, The Roper Center, P.O. Box 440, Storrs, CT 06268-0440)

* More than one in three male pastors in the Church of Sweden do not accept the ordination of women, according to a recent survey. Lutheran World Information (March 24) reports that the survey of 792 male Church of Sweden pastors finds that 37 percent said they oppose the ordination of women. In the diocese of Gothenburg, eight in 10 oppose the practice. The Church of Sweden Newspaper, which conducted the survey, observes that the survey results do not fit the theory that opposition to the ordination of women would diminish at the same pace as the retirement of opponents. One third of male pastors under 42 said they question the ordination of women. The corresponding figure among older male pastors was 39 percent. The ordained ministry was opened to women 35 years ago. A 1992 University of Uppsala survey showed that one in five deacons were against the ordination of women. (Lutheran World Information, 150 route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland)

* Most of the 2.3 million Muslims living in Germany are religious, according to a recent survey by the German Islamic Central Institute in Soest. Idea (April 11), the German evangelical news service, reports that about 60 percent of German Muslims visit a mosque regularly. Eighty percent of the adults fast during Ramadan. The news service compares such figures to those of German Protestants and Catholics: only five percent of Germany's 29.2 million Protestants go to church regularly, and 22 percent of the nation's 28.2 million Catholics attend mass regularly. The number of Muslims with German citizenship is about 66,500; more than half of these are women married to foreigners who converted to Islam for that reason. The institute estimates that about 2,000 Germans have converted to Islam for largely religious reasons in the past 10 years. [Whether or not these active Muslims are socially and politically active is not addressed by the above study. But a recent study sees a growth of "fundamentalist" or militant Islamic groups among German-Turk Muslims, partially in response to anti-foreigner and anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany; see April 93 RW] (Idea, Postfach 18 20, D-35528 Wetzlar, Germany)

**HOW FAR WILL
ISRAEL'S JEWISH
FAR-RIGHT GO?**

The massacre of 29 Arabs at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs in March has revealed the growing militancy as well as the fissures within the Jewish far-right in Israel, according to the New Republic magazine (April 18). Writer Gershom Gorenberg finds the various Jewish militant groups growing closer together since the peace accord was signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. The most militant Jewish organizations, such as Kach and Kahane Chai, are based around the teachings of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane (The gunman at the Hebron killings, Baruch Goldstein, was a member of Kach). Both groups, which have core memberships of only a few hundred in the Jewish settlements on the West Bank, adhere to Kahane's teaching that God had given the Jews 40 years to create a theocracy and "drive out the Arab" before the end. If the Jews passed the test, redemption would come peacefully; if not, it would be preceded by a "holocaust more horrible than anything we have yet endured." Gorenberg writes that "For the believers, with the apocalyptic clock ticking in their ears, the Rabin-Arafat handshake must have been terrifying."

The other major far-right Jewish group has been Gush Emunim, which has "thousands of people in tightly knit communities deep in the West Bank and its coterie of prominent rabbis is the mainstream Orthodox settlement movement." While its leaders claim it has nothing to do with Kahanism, Gush Emunim has elements that support radical measures to secure Israel's Jewish future, such as blowing up the Temple Mount and rebuilding the temple. For all of these settlers, "the pact with the PLO is an earthquake, and is causing deep fissures. Azriel Ariel, scion of a prominent Gush rabbinic family has urged the settlers to give up attempts to work with secular society and retreat into their closed communities. Others now say the final redemption will take much longer than expected." One leader of another small group of radical West Bank settlers says that support is growing for their view that the "present regime is illegitimate."

Meanwhile, considerable anxiety has been expressed about how the Orthodox settlers will respond when, in accordance with the Rabin-Arafat pact, they are called to withdraw from areas they have settled in order to make room for Palestinians. In The American Spectator magazine (March), Edward Norden writes the possibility of a "Jewish civil war," with Jewish settlers rebelling against Jewish authorities, should not be ruled out. Such a revolt could take the form of settlers refusing to serve their required stints in the Israel Defense Force, a reserve army that would be responsible for vacating contested settlement areas. Such a rebellion would turn into warfare if the ancient taboo against Jews killing Jews would be broken by militants. If no more than a few hundred settlers refuse to serve in the IDF and if the taboo against Jews firing on other Jews holds up even when the settlements may have to be emptied, "Israel should come through in one piece," Norden writes. He adds that "There is no guarantee that the taboo will hold. Much depends on how much disorder there is, what humble gifts the [secular] politicians reveal, and who among the rabbis exerts the most authority over people whose trust is supposed to be in God." (American Spectator, 2020 N. 14th St., Ste. 750, Box 549, Arlington, VA 22216)

**CHRISTIAN
ZIONISTS AND
SOUTH AFRICA'S
SILENT MAJORITY**

The burgeoning Zion Christian movement in South Africa is a little known but burgeoning phenomenon that is likely to play a new role in the nation's political and social life, according to the New York Times Magazine (April 17). Zion Christians make up the largest and fastest-growing religious movement in southern Africa with approximately 5 million members among South Africa's 30 million blacks. The Zionist movement, among which the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is the largest and most organized, has incorporated African rituals and practices, such as ancestor veneration, purification rites, folk healing and polygamy, with traditional Christian doctrine. The Zionists stand ready to influence post-apartheid South Africa in two ways, according to writer Bill Keller. Their strict standards, such as in prohibiting smoking and drinking and calling for pacifism, hard work, devotion to the family and sexual faithfulness are being seen as providing healthy alternatives to the rampage of the AIDS virus and growing political violence and wife-beating in black communities.

The Zionists, especially the centralized ZCC, are also being seen as representing and influencing a new moderate black political movement.

Surveys have shown that the Zionists are not an anomaly among South African blacks; Most blacks have a similar high respect for South African institutions (in one poll, when asked how proud they were to be South African, 88 percent said "very" or "quite," the same percentage as whites), believe in free enterprise and are deeply religious, especially as they have edged closer to many South African blacks, becoming less politically passive and socially inactive. Some white politicians have had close ties to the ZCC through its only two white leaders, Marc and Claudine de la Harpe, who run the church's multi-million dollar burial society and bus company. But with the rise of several younger more worldly members into leadership positions, the de la Harpes "have been marginalized and the church has begun to contemplate a greater secular role. The political posture of the ZCC has shifted from obeisance to neutrality," Keller adds.

ZCC Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane has issued messages telling Zionists they are free to engage in politics, even to the extent of supporting Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress. More civic-minded members of the ZCC are hoping to evaluate its social role in the future, such as with AIDS prevention work, an already active scholarship program, and a social service scheme that would enlist churchwomen to act as intermediaries between illiterates and the government programs designed to help them. [The recent elections in South Africa showed a majority voted for the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, but they gave little support to more radical parties and unexpected support to F.W. de Klerk's National Party, suggesting that there is still a strong moderate-to-conservative sentiment among South African blacks. Most Zion Christians appear to fit such a voter profile.]

C21

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



Inside This Issue:

- *Hispanic Catholics Adopt New Strategies*
- *Spirituality Moves Up To Management; Jewish Far-Right's Waterloo*