

RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

Volume 10 Number 1

November 1994

BABY BUSTERS-- A SPECIAL MISSION FIELD? AN ANALYSIS

Just as the mainstream media have been examining the emergence of "Generation X" or baby busters for the past several years, the religious press has in recent months pegged this generation as something of a new mission field. Christianity Today magazine (September 12) featured a cover story on Generation X (which seems to cover the age range of 16 to 29) billing them as a "post-Christian" generation who are religiously illiterate, accepting of religious pluralism, and pessimistic about the future due to such social phenomena as AIDS, MTV, and environmental problems. Such pessimism also arises from the fact that babybusters are more likely to come from broken homes than previous generations, leading many of them to distrust relationships and commitment. Because of such attitudes, many of those working with twentysomethings "warn that what once worked in evangelism and discipleship is failing with a large number of Xers," writes Andr s Tapia. Such observers agree that effective ministries for the twentysomethings focus on "emotional healing" and building genuine relationships and de-emphasize more dogmatic approaches. "Meditative prayer or quiet times are not popular with Xers. Being alone with a father figure is a scary proposition," writes Tapia.

At the same time, however, there is an affinity for the "authenticity of the preboomer population," meaning that Xers want role models among older church members. Tapia reports that there is a movement of baby buster-oriented churches, such as the California-based NewSong congregation, which tend to disdain the emphasis on bigness found in megachurches and favor more intimate services. The Christian left Sojourners magazine (November) also devotes a cover story to the spiritual lives of generation X and claims that they are out to change the church. The magazine asked a cross-section of baby busters selected from computer networks about their hopes for the church, and a common response was that the church should serve as an alternative to a technological society's ills; as one respondent said, "In our generation, people of faith need to be part of a new counterculture unwilling to sacrifice our souls for social, political, or financial gain."

The baby buster disaffection with established churches is also present among minority Christians, writes journalist Rodolpho Carrasco. He cites a "national phenomenon" of "young people raised in Latino [Protestant] congregations leaving for Anglo dominated superchurches or just dropping the faith altogether." The churches will have to help the baby busters deal with different terminology and strategies as old racial divisions (such as black versus white) give way to new forms of inter-racial issues

(Latino-Asian relations, for instance), he adds. Most of the attitudes ascribed to baby busters have a familiar ring to them; in fact, the calls for community, authenticity, a countercultural faith, egalitarian relationships and a distrust of dogmatism are the same concerns that are regularly revealed in surveys of older baby boomers (and perhaps even earlier generations?). In his recent book, Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation (Northfield Publishing, Chicago), researcher George Barna finds that busters don't have much of a loyalty to religious institutions; they are less likely to attend mainline Protestant churches than their parents; religious teachings do not have a strong bearing on their sexual practices; and they are more likely to have been influenced by alternative religious views (12 percent view God as the realization of human potential). In short, it appears that the baby busters are partaking of the same religious dynamics as the baby boomers-- only more so, since they are at a more experimental, rebellious age.

An article last winter in The Public Perspective (January/February), the journal of the Roper Center, casts a skeptical eye on the whole concept of generation X. The idea that twentysomethings are marked by a resentment against baby boomers and have been raised on minimal and bleak expectations has "resisted all survey research efforts to locate" such attitudes, writes Everett Carll Ladd. He adds that the "differences in social outlook among age groups stem not from persistent, determinative generational experiences, but simply from age." While some experiences, such as a change in gender relations or the growth of pluralism, can permanently change a generation's outlook, other events and developments (such as a parents' divorce or AIDS) may have less uniform and long-term impact, as they are experienced differently by young people of different social classes and upbringings. In other words, baby busters are as likely to swing between attitudes of individualism and loyalty to community and skepticism and idealism in their religious lives as the baby boomers who preceeded them. (Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188; Sojourners, 2401 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; The Public Perspective, The Roper Center, P.O. Box 440, Storrs, CT 06268-0440)

SCIENCE/RELIGION DIALOGUE ADVANCING FROM BOTH SIDES

Although there has been an increasing number of organizations specializing in the interaction of science and religion, often such a relationship has moved in one direction, with religious believers making most of the overtures to the world of science. There are signs that this is changing, however, as mainstream science is beginning to see more value in the dialogue with religion and theology, according to a report in the popular science magazine, Omni (October). The greater mutual relationship between the two fields could be seen at last year's meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), where there were several sessions devoted to religion and science that were filled to capacity. "The sessions were so popular it is rumored that some scientists were annoyed and voiced the opinion behind the scenes that this was unsuitable material for the AAAS." But observers see a much more positive response on religion issues coming from the scientific community in recent years. One reason for the new openness is that prominent scientists have gone public with their faith, making the two fields seem less antagonistic toward each other. Such scientists as physicist Charles Townes and George Ellis (an associate of Stephen

Hawking and a Quaker) are active in fostering the science-religion dialogue.

While physics has been viewed in the past several years as the main playing field where theologians and scientists have dialogued and in some cases conspired together [see May 91 RW for a report on the connections between theology and physics], it appears that biology is now receiving a good deal of attention, even by the government. The Berkeley, Calif.-based Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, which has become a main catalyst for the science-religion convergence, recently received funding from the National Institutes of Health to study the religious implications of the Human Genome Project-- the international effort to decode the set of genes contained in human chromosomes. Ted Peters, the director of the project, says that religious groups are already lined up against scientific efforts to tamper with human DNA (through the organizing of such activists as Jeremy Rifkin). Peters and his associates have not taken a pro- or anti- stance on the project, but he notes that a more likely candidate to be the major science versus religion issue in the future is genetic determinism, especially as scientists are beginning to talk about genes for behavioral traits such as aggression and alcoholism. "From a theological perspective, genetic determinism is untenable because it leaves no room for free will and therefore undermines the very foundations of ethical behavior," notes Margaret Wetheim. (Omni, 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023-5965)

**VIETNAMESE-
AMERICAN
CATHOLICS KEEP
TRADITIONS,
VOCATIONS**

After two decades in the U.S., Vietnamese Catholics have maintained their traditional religious identity, resisting such trends in American Catholicism as priest shortages, according to the National Catholic Reporter (October 14). The young adults who fled Vietnam as boat people in the early 1970s are parents or even grandparents now. The Catholics among them have retained a faith rooted in traditional devotions to Mary and popular piety, such as the Rosary, according to Fr. Peter Phan of Catholic University. Of the approximately 800,000 Vietnamese in the U.S., 25 percent are Catholic. The Vietnamese-American Catholics have retained a high level of prestige attached to the priesthood, keeping seminaries crowded. In San Diego, for instance, nine of the 26 seminarians enrolled at St. Francis Seminary are Vietnamese. But the Vietnamese-American Catholic community has also experienced change and conflict in their adaptation to America.

Like their European and Hispanic predecessors, the Vietnamese Catholics are divided on whether they should follow a model based on national churches (serving only Vietnamese) or multicultural parishes. As they have met their basic needs and gained self-assurance, the Vietnamese have "progressed from docile obedience to the wishes of their local priests to involvement and leadership in parish life," writes Dorothy Vidulich. In Vietnam, the church is strongly clerical, giving few roles to women. In American churches, both sexes are strongly involved in parish life, with Vietnamese women serving as eucharistic ministers and lectors. Much of the future resilience of the Vietnamese Catholic community will depend on the current generation of young people. Catholic University's Phan says that Vietnamese youth have the "same critical, questioning attitudes that many Americans have toward such issues as birth control and divorce." However, another Vietnamese priest says that young Vietnamese are showing "great interest both in spirituality and in their Vietnamese

LIBERAL CATHOLICS LOOKING TO MARRIED PRIESTS FOR RITUALS

Disaffected and liberal Catholics are choosing married priests who have been officially barred from ministry to conduct weddings and other ceremonies, according to the Providence Journal-Bulletin (September 17). In recent years there has been a growth of organizations of married priests, such as CORPUS, which have been active in pressing for liberal reforms in the Catholic Church. Louise Haggett, founder of Celibacy Is The Issue (CITI), another married priest organization, says that thousands of people are turning to married priests in increasing numbers to do baptisms, Eucharists and weddings-- either because they have run into problems with church rules that prevent their receiving the sacraments (such as being remarried after divorce) or because they feel more comfortable with a married priest. According to Catholic teachings, priests who marry are still recognized as priests by the church, although carrying out such priestly duties as saying the mass and conducting weddings is unlawful. In the case of weddings, any such ceremonies carried out are not recognized as valid Catholic marriages. Nevertheless, people who seek out such priests are not concerned about these rules. "What they care about is that their wedding is being performed by a man they believe has been anointed by God," according to the article.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST'S LIBERAL- CONSERVATIVE BATTLE

A struggle appears to be escalating between "liberals" and "fundamentalists" in the Churches of Christ, according to the Baptist newspaper Baptists Today (September 22). The Churches of Christ are a Southern based, conservative, and strongly congregational movement that seeks to restore New Testament Christianity. For several years, some "ultra-conservative" Churches of Christ have been charging that the "inroads of modernism and liberalism" are affecting the denomination. Such conservatives object to any instrumental music in worship services (a traditional position in the Churches of Christ), any addresses or prayers led by women, and any fellowship with other religious bodies. The struggle and protests became visible when the Churches of Christ of Tennessee held a "Christian Jubilee" in Nashville in July. One of the primary sponsors of the event was the Woodmont Church of Christ whose pastor, Rubel Shelly, has been widely criticized with that body for leading an interdenominational Easter service last spring, which included several church choirs and musicians. (Baptists Today, 403 West Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur, GA 30030)

NEW BIBLES NARROWING SCHOLAR- LAY GAP

Publishers are bringing major transformations to the ways that Americans read and understand the Bible, according to Publisher's Weekly (October 10). Starting with Harvest House's "The Narrated Bible" and continuing with Thomas Nelson's "Geneva Bible," publishers are rearranging the order of verses and chapters so that they read like stories rather than follow the traditional chronologies dictated by the original authors. The report concludes that the "resulting clarity is breathtaking." Harvest House reports a sale of over 600,000 by the Fall of 1994. Nelson, meanwhile, has published a new edition which lays the King James Version

side by side with the New King James Version Greek English version, thus making available to the general lay reader the capacity for same page comparisons for the first time. Moody Press of Chicago has recently published a "New American Standard Bible" complete with cross references and concordance designed to fit into the lay reader's day planner calendar. Observers find such innovations part of a movement to remove barriers for Bible study that often exist between the professional religionist and the lay reader. The popularity of these new editions illustrate how the traditional separation between academic and clergy-oriented materials from the general reader is now becoming a thing of the past.-- *By Erling Jorstad, RW Contributing Editor.*

EVANGELICAL ANTI-CULTISTS TURN TO HOUSE CLEANING

No longer focusing on the now-moribund cults of earlier times, such as the Unification Church, the Children of God, and The Way, evangelical researchers are increasingly pointing to what they claim are cultic inroads within several of the fastest growing ministries in the evangelical world. Christianity Today magazine (October 24) reports that the popular Word-Faith movement, centered around Kenneth Hagin, Benny Hinn and Trinity Broadcasting Network, are increasingly being criticized for deviating from the traditional evangelical faith by such anti-cult groups as the Christian Research Institute. During a conference held in Philadelphia in September, the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, a watchdog coalition, took aim at such Word-Faith teachings and practices, as prosperity theology, highly emotional and untraditional services, and a deemphasis on doctrine.

A good deal of attention was given to the new practice of "holy laughter," where participants laugh and then often fall to the floor in states of ecstasy, that is sweeping through many charismatic churches. Some observers say that the countercult leaders are using double standards in criticizing some experimental programs and ignoring others. John Stackhouse of the University of Manitoba says that such emotional behavior may only demonstrate that people are enthusiastic about their faith and worship. The magazine reports that the groups under such criticism are using such charges to affirm their priorities of faith and reach out for new members. --*By Erling Jorstad.*

PROTESTANT SEMINARIES FACING NEW CHALLENGES

Protestant seminaries in the U.S. are facing an uncertain future as they seek to train new kinds of students and forge stronger relationships with congregations, reports Christianity Today (October 24). Although many seminaries report increased enrollment for 1994-95, almost all of them are facing major financial dislocations, increasingly sharp dissent over curriculum, and dissatisfaction from local congregations about the aims and objectives of seminary education. The report points out that although certain long range objectives, such as increased female enrollment, have been achieved, there is a loss of financial support from the congregation, which are themselves reducing their outreach ministries, as well as new conflicts over what courses should receive the highest priority. Most congregations, and a few innovative seminaries, want more experimental pastoral management programs. Most seminary faculties, however, continue to hold to the traditional emphasis on rigorous academic course work.

The heart of the conflict revolves around the growing demands by local churches that seminaries adapt to their needs versus the academy's conviction that it must provide formal, traditional degree programs. The article notes that since the mid-1980s, the nature of seminary student bodies underwent drastic changes. Now with far more women and second career students, the schools have been searching for but have not yet found a viable formula for trying to serve so many assorted constituencies. By mid-decade, the seminaries have shown that they can be responsive to the new pressures. Many have established satellite campuses, such as Fuller Theological Seminary; some have revised and even eliminated internship requirements; some offer weekend courses and a wide variety of workshops and conferences; in 1993 over 3,000 such programs were offered. In sum, the seminary revolution is demonstrating the difficulty as well as the necessity of improved cooperation between theology and church practice --*Erling Jorstad*

CURRENT RESEARCH *Recent Findings On Religious Attitudes And Behavior*

RELIGION PROVIDES FUEL FOR SMALL GROUP EXPLOSION

* Small groups gathering together on a wide range of concerns draw much of their vitality and growth from religious institutions, according to a recent study by Princeton University sociologist Robert Wuthnow. Recent studies have shown that four Americans in 10 belong to small groups that meet on a wide range of concerns, but it has been more difficult to tell how many of such gatherings deal with religion and spirituality. Wuthnow found that a majority of members of small groups (54 percent) report their ranks are drawn largely from the local religious congregation, and nearly half (48 percent) say the group they belong to is just one of many such units at their local church or synagogue, according to a report in *Emerging Trends*, the Gallup newsletter on religion. About half of the respondents say that their small group receives material support from the local religious organization (45 percent), and that they are conscious of the fact that these groups are an integral part of the church or synagogue's "growth plan" (47 percent). About one group in three was initiated by a member of the clergy.

A majority of 57 percent characterize small groups as a regular activity of their congregation, and 51 percent say they meet in churches or synagogues. Sixty nine percent say they pray in their small groups, and 63 percent say they discuss religious issues. Rather than encouraging insular religious practices, over half the members say their experiences in small groups have given them a better understanding of people with different religious perspectives than their own (55 percent), and encouraged them to serve others outside their group (69 percent). Fifty five percent also say their groups have helped them to share their faith with people outside the group (55 percent). Protestants are more likely than Catholics to include prayer or Bible studies in their groups. Catholics show a greater tendency to focus on specific topics and interests. (*Emerging Trends*, 47 Hulfish St., Suite 215, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542)

RELIGION COVERAGE IN MEDIA BECOMING PRIVATIZED?

* While coverage of religion in the media is improving, there is an increasing tendency for journalists to focus on the personal, non-institutional forms of faith to the detriment of more public-oriented issues, according to a recent study by the University of Colorado. The study, entitled Religion In Public Discourse: The Role Of The Media, follows a 1989 examination of religion in the media by the university

which found that the public and journalists generally want more and better coverage of religion. The new study, led by Stewart Hoover, found that the religion beat has improved, with more attention being paid to diverse areas of religious life. Broadcasters are also becoming more interested in the field, as ABC and National Public Radio (NPR) recently hired religion specialists. Hoover writes that NPR exemplifies the trend toward a more non-institutional approach to religion coverage, where personal experiences and the individual search for morals and "meaning," are more important than the activity of churches and other such organizations. This is also seen in the recent tendency of religion sections in newspapers to be called "religion and ethics." Hoover writes that the tendency to privatize religion is present in most areas of American life as there are few tools to help people craft a "public discourse of religion." (For more information on the study write: Center for Mass Media Research, Campus Box 287, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0287)

BELIEVERS IN PARANORMAL GRAVITATE TO THIRD PARTIES

* A disproportionate number of people who believe in New Age and paranormal concepts and techniques tend to vote for third-party conservatives, according to a recent study by Rhode Island College psychology professor Tom Randall. The Skeptical Inquirer (Fall) reports that although people who claim to believe strongly in supernatural occurrences usually describe themselves as liberals, Randall found that third-party supporters--such as those for Ross Perot--had, by far, the highest level of belief in the paranormal-- Republicans had the lowest. Randall says that his findings seem to suggest that such supporters of third-party conservatives may be embracing candidates who offer quick, easy, and almost magical solutions to problems. (Skeptical Inquirer, Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703)

LITTLE EVIDENCE FOUND FOR SATANIST FACTOR IN RITUAL ABUSE CASES

* There is little solid evidence that cases of ritual abuse against children and animals are carried out by actual Satanists, according to a recent study. In surveying more than 11,000 psychiatric and police workers throughout the U.S., the study found 12,000 accusations of group cult abuse based on satanic ritual, but not one that investigators had been able to substantiate, according to a report in the New York Times (October 31). While the study, conducted for the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, found little evidence for the well-publicized claim that there are organized satanic groups, it did find "convincing evidence of lone perpetrators or couples who say they are involved with Satan or use the claim to intimidate victims," says Dr. Gail Goodman, a psychologist at the University of California at Davis, who directed the study.

SOUTH AFRICAN HINDUS RETURN TO FOLD?

* Among South African Hindus there is trend toward "reversing conversion" from other groups, according to Hinduism Today newspaper (September). From 1940 to 1960, mass conversions to Christianity decreased South Africa's Hindu population from 80 percent to 60 percent. Recent polls, however, show the Indian community consists of 64 percent Hindus, 20 percent Muslims, 13 percent Christians and others at 3 percent. The newspaper reports that youth are at the forefront of the Hindu resurgence in the country. They regularly take part in temple programs and other religious events. (Hinduism Today, 107 Kaholalele Rd., Kapaa, Hawaii 96746)

RWANDAN CRISIS DAMAGES CHURCH CREDIBILITY

Once-respected religious institutions are suffering from a crisis of confidence in Rwanda in the wake of the fierce political and ethnic warfare that killed thousands last summer and spring, according to the New York Times (October 17). The Catholic Church "lost not only scores of priests and other religious workers, but also the confidence of many of the faithful whose families were hacked to death in churches and who believed that the church hierarchy betrayed them," reports the newspaper. Critics say the church, of which 60 percent of Rwandans are members, did not speak out clearly against the civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, especially against the Hutus, to which many church leaders had close ties. Like the rest of Rwanda, the church was often divided along ethnic lines. The church leadership, particularly Archbishop Nsengiyumva of Kigali, had close ties to the Hutu Government of President Juvénal Habyarimana. The archbishop and other leaders were killed last June by renegade rebel soldiers.

A recent report by the London-based organization African Rights found that the killers clearly chose the church as a target in their drive to destroy Rwandan society. Such massacres and destruction of church facilities dispelled the belief that the church could offer protection. The current government formed by the Tutsi rebels says it does not want the Catholic Church to be as powerful as before, and soldiers have harassed and even threatened to arrest priests who are too outspoken and independent. The sense of failure among the churches is not limited to the Catholics. Although Protestant churches were less entangled with the government and there was greater ethnic diversity in their churches, their concentration on personal morality and apolitical stance rendered them silent during the crisis, according to the evangelical digest Current Thoughts & Trends (September). The pietism of the Protestant churches made them hesitant to speak out on the problems that led to the massacres, such as Habyarimana's single party rule, regional nepotism, and the resulting corruption. The task of both Protestant and Catholic churches will be to deal with "issues of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation, all required to restore Rwandan society," according to the magazine. (Current Thoughts & Trends, Box 35004, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-3504)

Religion Watch

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



Inside This Issue:

- How Unique is Generation X?
- Vietnam Catholics Buck Trends; Update on Small Group Religion

FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

November/December 1994

PRESSNOTES

* The issue of Omni magazine (October) cited in this issue of RW also merits attention for its broad treatment of science-religion topics and developments. The issue features articles on Vatican astronomers, Marian apparitions, the blending of mysticism, mathematics, and music at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and the relation of UFOs to religion (UFO groups have borrowed Theosophical and more recently New Age and even evangelical terminology and concepts). Especially noteworthy is an in-depth interview with respected physicist Frank Tipler who has developed a controversial theory about the universe from the beginning to the end of time, predicting the existence of God, resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting, mainly through computer technology. The issue costs \$3.50 and is available from: Omni, 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023-5965.

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

1) The appeal of the Faith & Politics Institute in Washington suggests that conservative politicians are not the only ones seeking a connection between their faith and work. The institute conducts small group discussions and offers support and retreats for members of Congress, aides, lobbyists, and other political leaders. The institute was started in 1988 by Doug Tanner, who considers himself a spiritual advisor to politicians. Participants in the meetings say they can share everything--from family problems to work conflicts that challenge their ethics during a period when politicians are finding increasing mistrust by the American public. In weekly meetings held for four small groups (two for members of Congress and two for aides and lobbyists), Tanner begins each session with meditation and relaxation. He then offers brief readings from the Bible or other spiritual sources as a framework of discussion for the session. At retreats, participants engage in storytelling. The participants welcome the more diverse spiritual atmosphere--from New Age to Jewish--as compared to the more Christian-oriented weekly prayer breakfast held for politicians. The institute is run on a modest budget and is housed in the Methodist Building across from the Capitol. (Source: Common Boundary, November/December)

2) The Charismatic Episcopal Church has grown explosively since it was founded two years ago for its blend of traditional Anglican liturgy and charismatic worship. The CEC has added at least one full congregation per week to its ranks over the past two years and at present has about 16,000 members in over 120 parishes. The San Clemente, Calif.-based denomination was started by dissident Episcopalians, but now a wide spectrum of congregations are becoming part of the CEC: independent charismatics and Pentecostals, Methodists, Wesleyans, Lutherans and Episcopalians. The group is currently seeking closer relations with other traditional (or "continuing") Anglican bodies, such as the Anglican Church in America. (Source: The Christian Challenge, October/November)

3) The rise of Christopher Sun and his multi-ethnic evangelistic

crusades in Southern California is showing the emerging diversity of evangelicalism, at least in this region. Sun's backers say that he is leading the largest multi-ethnic crusades in the U.S., as he has gained the support of Anglo, Latino, Asian and African-American churches. Sun, who was born in Taiwan but educated in the U.S., has mainly conducted crusades in Asia and now is based in Arcadia, Calif. (Source: Los Angeles Times, September 10)

4) The Noah Webster Academy is pioneering a new marriage of computer networks and Christian home schooling, as well as serving as a likely lightning rod for church-state battles. The academy, which opened in September, has no classrooms. It consists of an Ionia, Michigan-based network of 2,000 students throughout the state who are taught at home by parents, many using a religious curriculum. Eleven teachers work at the headquarters manning toll free telephone help lines. The school plans to install an advanced computer network for text transmission, video lectures and assignments. The academy, run by an evangelical Christian, maintains that it is not a religious school but rather allows religious values to be taught at home along with other subjects. Such a distinction is important, since the school is one of several experimental "charter" schools in Michigan which are to receive the same state funding as public schools. Critics are charging that funding of the academy threatens the separation of church and state. (Source: Wall Street Journal, September 16)

5) The Urban Relocator Movement consists of a growing number of middle-class white, black and Latino evangelicals who have moved into inner-cities as a form of social ministry. It is estimated by the Chicago-based Christian Community Development Association that there are more than 5,500 evangelicals involved in this growing movement to help alleviate the deteriorating conditions of American inner cities. Some have even relocated their churches to these neighborhoods, such as the New Heritage Christian Center in the Englewood section of Chicago. It is reported that the presence of middle class evangelical families in such cities as Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Los Angeles is bringing structural and personal changes to declining neighborhoods. This is because such newcomers serve as role models as well as bring into neighborhoods a network of family and friends who can be tapped for donated services, volunteer tutors, and job leads. The movement is also working to alleviate racial tensions. (Source: Christianity Today, September 12)

6) The October Statement has been circulating among conservative Catholics who are attempting to establish a new kind of Catholic political left as an alternative to the influence of neoconservatism in the church. There has been a growing debate in conservative Catholic circles about the value of capitalism, with such neoconservatives as Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and George Weigel claiming that the Vatican has accepted the free market in such papal encyclicals as *Centesimus Annus*. The statement, formally entitled, "A Civilization of Love," was signed by Catholic intellectuals associated with such publications as the *New Oxford Review* and the *Catholic Worker*. It criticizes capitalism for its its oppressive tendencies and calls for a greater commitment to simple lifestyles and something resembling "distributism," a theory popularized by British writer G.K. Chesterton which favors private property while insisting that capitalist ownership should be distributed to the masses rather than monopolized. The statement was published simultaneously in the October issue of such Catholic journals as the *New Oxford Review*, *Communio*, the *Catholic Worker*, and *Inside the Vatican*. (Source: *Inside the Vatican*, October)