

# RELIGION WATCH

A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion

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**POLITICS  
SHAPE 1994  
RELIGIOUS  
TRENDS**

Most religious trends unfold and take shape over the course of years rather than months or weeks and are detected by drawing connections between unsensational events. Other developments, however, are revealed and set into motion by singular current events. In 1994, such politically oriented events as the Cairo population conference meeting and the Republican victory in the November elections revealed developments that are likely to have a long term impact in the world of religion. As in previous years, RELIGION WATCH'S review of 1994 religion also analyzes how such developments may be played out in the years ahead. Issues of RW where these trends and events have been covered are cited after each item.

1) The massive Republican victory last November was proof that the religious right still retains strength as a national political force. While the religious right, and especially such groups as the Christian Coalition, will be a force with which to contend in the selection of the GOP Presidential ticket, it should not be assumed that its key issues will be translated into legislation. It is unknown how Newt Gingrich and other leading Republicans will move on the pro-life front. Anti-gay rights measures initiated and supported by religious right groups in such states as Oregon and Colorado were defeated. Even if school prayer is passed, it is uncertain whether its implementation would please many conservative Christian activists-- a segment of which has questioned if such measures might water down true faith and devotion. (See the December issue of RW)

2) Last year also saw the public emergence of a movement of radical anti-abortion activists. While there has been anti-abortion violence for the past two decades, the killing of an Alabama abortion doctor by Paul Hill last year brought to the surface a radical segment of the pro-life movement (through such groups as Advocates for Life Ministries) openly publicizing its view that performing abortion may be cause for "justifiable homicide." [The media attention surrounding the late December killings in two abortion clinics in Massachusetts showed again that such groups are not hesitant to publicize their views]. It remains to be seen whether the death sentence against Hill will serve to make him a martyr and thus strengthen this movement. (September RW)

3) The "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" statement issued last year was another step in the growing alliance between American evangelicals and Roman Catholics. The statement issued by conservative Catholic and evangelical leaders called both for greater cooperation on social issues, such as pro-life causes, as well as aiming for a more novel theological consensus that would put a moratorium on proselytizing active members of

each group. The subsequent criticisms in the evangelical press dealt with the theological part of the statement; there was little disagreement on the importance of the evangelical-Catholic alliance on social and moral issues. It seems that rank-and-file evangelicals, especially those outside North America, will be less likely than their leaders to make the distinctions between active and nominal Catholics in their evangelistic efforts. (April RW)

4) The role of the Vatican in making a more qualified statement on abortion at the UN conference on population in Cairo last September was a signal to some observers that the church is shifting from a diplomatic to a more "prophetic" mode in addressing international concerns. There is some debate about whether a solid Catholic-Muslim alliance emerged from the conference. It was reported that such an alliance broke down over the Muslim's greater support of family planning efforts. Yet only about a month after the event it was reported that several Muslim leaders strongly supported a proposal for the creation of a world council of religions because of the cooperation and agreement they experienced with Catholics at the Cairo conference. (October RW)

5) A revival that broke out last year has re-energized the charismatic movement both in North America and Europe. The unique earmark of the revival, often called the "Toronto blessing," is the occurrence of "holy laughter" during services. The phenomenon has spread from the independent charismatic Vineyard churches to other charismatic networks and it is reported to be revitalizing stagnant ministries and churches, especially in Britain. The revival is popular enough in the charismatic community for evangelical countercult ministries to be devoting considerable attention to it. (September and November RW)

6) The desire for greater interracial unity and cooperation among white and black Pentecostals was expressed last year by the creation of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America. The pan-Pentecostal group plans conferences, resource sharing and other joint ministries. Although there has been a recent growth of interracial charismatic congregations, the new organization has its work cut out for it, as most denominational Pentecostal and charismatic churches remain segregated. (May RW)

7) Although the controversial Re-Imagining Conference took place in 1993, the furor of protests over the feminist gathering intensified throughout most of 1994. There have been conflicts and controversies over feminist theology in mainline Protestant denominations for over two decades, but Re-Imagining, which seeks to explore the feminine aspects of God, appears to have mobilized into action the once silent centrists as well as denominational conservatives. Although the controversy has calmed down, with the Re-Imagining proponents taking a less confrontational stance in a recent conference, it is clear that various shades of feminist theology are supported by many in mainline leadership, continuing to make such issues among the divisive in these churches. (June RW). -- RW  
*Contributing Editor Erling Jorstad contributed to this review.*

**EMERGING  
RELIGIOUS  
LEADERSHIP  
CONSERVATIVE?**

The most innovative and influential religious leaders of the upcoming generation are likely to be conservative and engaged in activism, according to Time magazine (December 5). The editors of the magazine

screened hundreds of candidates under 40 years of age for those likely to play leadership roles in society for the future and found 50 men and women who they think will "make a difference." Those selected in the religious field were: R. Albert Mohler, 35, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, for the conservative leadership role he has had in the school and the SBC; Ralph Reed, the 33-year-old head of the Christian Coalition, for his shrewd ability to reconcile "biblical conservatism" with mainstream politics; and Helen Alvarè, spokeswoman for the Catholic bishops on abortion, for her "pro-life feminism." Noticeably absent from the leadership profiles were any young leaders-to-be on the liberal side of the religious spectrum (although there were several liberals selected in other fields).

RW went back to a similar profile of emerging leaders under 40 that Time ran in 1979 (August 6 issue) and found a different pattern. The three young leaders connected to religion who were selected were activists but this time on the liberal-radical end of the spectrum. They were: Jim Wallis of Sojourners, pioneer of the evangelical left; Sr. Elizabeth Morancy, a political activist nun from Rhode Island; and Jesse Jackson, then an activist working with disadvantaged youths. In a different vein, Utne Reader (January/February), a digest of the alternative press, selected 100 "visionaries" whose thinking is making an impact in the world. Many of the selected thinkers connected to religion are in the same New Age-alternative spirituality orbit of the magazine, serving as a sort of "who's who" of such movements. They include: Ecology theologians Thomas Berry and Matthew Fox; Eastern thinkers Deepak Chopra and Fritjof Capra; Jewish renewal leader Michael Lerner; and Terence McKenna, whose writings draw together paganism, technology and psychedelic drugs. More surprising is the inclusion of neoconservative Catholic thinker Richard John Neuhaus and W. Deen Mohammed, a conservative mainstream black Muslim leader. (Utne Reader, 1624 Harmon Place, Minneapolis, MN 55403)

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#### **HOMOSEXUAL MAINLINE GROUPS CHANGING STRATEGY**

Homosexual organizations within mainline Protestant groups are calling for a change of strategy from one of political activity toward a "ministry orientation" that puts an emphasis on direct service to gays and lesbians in the churches, according to Second Stone (November/December), an ecumenical gay and lesbian newspaper. Such organizations as Lutherans Concerned and the Episcopalian Integrity have long pressed for greater acceptance of practicing homosexuals in their mainline bodies but they have had limited success in changing church teachings. For instance, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America recently issued a second draft of a sexuality statement that had initially caused an avalanche of protest for approving homosexual relationships; the second draft rules against homosexual activity. Lutherans Concerned director Bob Gibeling says that as congregations are concentrating their funds to the local level, programs that minister to homosexuals on a congregation basis, such as Reconciled in Christ [congregations that publicly commit to welcoming gays and lesbians] will take on greater significance.

Lutherans Concerned is leading the way in making the shift from political advocacy to giving more direct support to homosexuals in congregations. "We have to make efforts to break through the barriers to get to closeted folks in the pews in the back of the church...and position ourselves as a resource to pastors. We need to connect people and create awareness,"

Gibeling adds. Another change due to the lack of support from church leaderships is to emphasize coalition-building between the various (unofficial) denominational gay and lesbian groups. Under the leadership of Integrity and Lutherans Concerned, there is a consensus among such groups "to unite with one voice" in order to counteract the influence of the religious right and press for congregation-based acceptance of homosexuals. But Gibeling admits that a political fight has to be continued in order to exert influence within denominations. For instance, the ELCA has thwarted the visibility of Lutherans Concerned by not allowing them advertising space in their official magazine or the presence of a booth at the church-wide assembly. (Second Stone, P.O. Box 8340, New Orleans, LA 70182)

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**UNOFFICIAL  
ORGANIZATIONS  
MUSHROOM IN  
MORMONISM**

There has been a sharp growth in Mormon organizations dealing with humanitarian concerns and support groups focusing on homosexuality, according to Sunstone (December), an independent Mormon magazine. In compiling a list of current Mormon-based (official and unofficial) organizations for Sunstone, researcher Bryan Waterman notes that there have been three major areas of organizational growth from 10 years ago when the magazine conducted a similar survey. Since 1985, church-related humanitarian organizations have sprouted up-- from the church-wide fasts for Ethiopia in 1985 to several new relief groups which have met under the umbrella of the International Action group since 1992. The area experiencing the greatest increase of audience-specific publications and organizations is the gay and lesbian Mormon community. While the 1985 list includes only the forerunner group, Affirmation, and a parents' support group, the new list contains 15 organizations or publications directed at the gay community, ranging from Evergreen International, which aims to change same-sex orientation, to Reconciliation, the goal of which is to increase spirituality in the lives of gay Mormons. Also experiencing sharp growth are the Mormon computer networks. Waterman finds at least 25 national and international Mormon computer networks and discussion groups. He adds that women organizations have also grown in the Mormon fold during the last 10 years. (Sunstone, 331 Rio Grande St., Suite 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136)

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**PLETHORA OF  
HOLIDAYS  
SHOW SENSITIVITY  
TOWARD RELIGIOUS  
MINORITIES**

In sensitivity to religious minorities, American officials and religious leaders have made the month of December a veritable feast of holidays and religious celebrations. The Washington Post (December 24) reports that the desire of parents not to let their children feel left out during the Christmas holidays, as well as officials attempting to represent all religious minorities in public spaces, has led to a growing diversity of religious celebrations and displays. "In public places--schools, offices and government buildings--the result is often an artificial balance among Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanza [an Africa-American celebration], USA Muslim Day, [and] the Hindu celebration of Diwali... The explosion of celebration is not limited to schools, where many districts' holiday celebrations are now dictated by professionals known as diversity coordinators. The Islamic Affairs council has pressured several large banks into adding a crescent and star to lobby displays of Christmas trees and Hanukah menorahs," reports Marc Fisher. He adds that "some religious leaders teachers and parents worry that embracing all religions blurs their essential differences...some educators argue that the blizzard of

religious images that schools, stores and other groups produce in December creates identity confusion and threatens to wash out the differences among religions and cultures."

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**PREMILLENNIAL  
THEOLOGIANS  
RETHINK READING  
'SIGNS OF TIMES'**

As the year 2000 draws closer and the number of self-proclaimed seers and prophets attract more attention, evangelical scholars are reassessing much of their traditional, premillennial theology of the end-times. The U.S. News & World Report (December 19) reports that a number of conservative specialists who focus on biblical teachings about the last days are moving away from the traditional position that focus on searching for "signs of the time," or indications of the second coming through world current events (such as locating the Anti-Christ in a world leader). Scholars at such strongholds of evangelical premillennial theology as Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute are finding scriptural evidence that the unfolding of world events probably offers fewer infallible clues as to a divine plan at work in bringing the world to a final ending. The new specialists refrain from setting exact timetables or identifying specific individuals as signs that the end is near. The magazine also cites recent polls showing the wide division among American laity about the end times. Of those who believe Jesus will return physically, 34 percent say it will be in a few years or a few decades; some 59 percent believe the world will end at a specific point in time; 60 percent state that the Bible speaks literally of a final judgement day; and 49 percent hold to a literal interpretation of the anti-Christ.-- *By Erling Jorstad.*

**CURRENT RESEARCH: *Recent Findings On Religious Attitudes And Behavior***

**MAINLINE  
PROTESTANTS  
STILL MAKE UP  
DISPROPORTIONATE  
SHARE OF ELITES**

\* Mainline Protestants continue to make up far more of America's social, political, and economic elites than their share of the population in general, according to a Purdue University study. The National & International Religion Report (December 26) notes that the study found that Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and United Church of Christ members represent less than five percent of Americans, but account for more than one-third of the people in "Who's Who in America" who listed their religious affiliation. In comparing religious affiliation and its connection to secular prestige from 1930 to 1992, researchers found Jews number 12 percent (up from one percent) although they account for only two percent of the population. Catholics rose from four percent in 1930 to 23 percent. (National & International Religion Report, P.O. Box 21433, Roanoke, VA 24018-0145)

**RELIGION STILL  
A FACTOR IN  
EUROPEANS  
FINANCING  
EDUCATION**

\* A country's dominant religious tradition continues to have an effect on how higher education is financed in Europe, according to a recent study cited in the Chronicle of Higher Education (December 7). Hèlène Ulleroe of the University of Oslo recently conducted a study of how students in Western Europe financed their educations and found that in traditionally Roman Catholic countries, such as France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy, the main financial burden of higher education falls on families. In such countries, direct state support through grants or loans is limited to a small number of students. In the more Protestant, primarily northern European countries, financial support was found to come from state programs that do not take parental contributions into account and are available to all students enrolled in recognized education programs.

Ulleroe concludes that "For Catholic families, they are used to helping each other out. For Protestants it is, 'You're 16 now. Move on.'" She notes that with state support for higher education decreasing everywhere throughout Europe, "the burden on the student and his or her family is getting heavier."

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**COVERT  
MISSIONARIES  
GAIN ENTRY TO  
CLOSED COUNTRIES**

Evangelicals are "stepping up their efforts to penetrate Asia, the Middle East and North Africa"--regions where governments explicitly ban missionaries-- by taking advantage of these governments' need for foreign investors, teachers and relief workers, according to Pacific News Service (December 5-9). By taking such positions in areas closed to missionaries, these Christians are discovering new entry points to such "mission fields." Some of these covert missionaries come to such countries as part of business or even government delegations on a fact-finding trip. "Others come in on tourist visas but with an itinerary that includes visiting secret Christian cell groups. Many come for extended visits on student or work visas, sponsored by their churches or by Christian business groups back home explicitly created to help them gain entry to closed countries," reports Andres Tapia and Jo Kadlecek. Some critics denounce these missionaries as "spiritual Trojan horses" who operate under false pretenses.

In countries such as China and Egypt that do not grant missionary visas, those caught evangelizing are charged with breaking the law and are subject to expulsion. Once conversions start taking place, the covert missionaries work with the new believers and other local Christians to set up clandestine prayer meetings and home churches, staying in touch with other Christians through "elaborate communications systems." One missionary in Turkey uses his lap top computer to scramble messages before uploading them into the Internet via a dial linkup in London. In the U.S., his home church then downloads the message by using a special unscrambling program. (Pacific News Service, 450 Mission St., Rm. 506, San Francisco, CA 94105)

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**MILITARY SEEKING  
RELIGIOUS  
REINFORCEMENTS**

There are reports that the Russian military is seeking closer ties to religious faith, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, largely to bolster the morale of soldiers. Some see such rapprochement between the military and the church as another sign that Orthodoxy is becoming increasingly rightist and nationalist, excluding other religions from a role in the country, but not all observers view the new ties with such alarm. The Swiss-based Ecumenical News International bulletin (December 5) reports that the Orthodox Church and the Russian Defense Ministry have recently issued a "program for the patriotic education of youth," along with other joint army/church initiatives. At a conference of church and army representatives, Orthodox leaders offered to nominate priests to be present at regular "military oath" inductions for military personnel, even though there are constitutional obstacles to the presence of priests at such ceremonies. General Ivan Mikulin stressed at the meeting that soldiers and conscripts would enjoy "full religious freedom" and that no "nationalist or interconfessional divisions" would emerge in the army ranks.

In the conservative magazine Chronicles (December), Robert C. Whitten writes that behind the new interest in church support is Russia's desire to attract and re-energize soldiers in the process of rebuilding its "military-industrial complex."-- and such re-energizing need not be done exclusively by the Orthodox. Whitten, director of the Navy League of the United States, has participated in conferences that the Russians have organized over the past three years that have included Westerners (mostly civilians) experienced in troop morale and social welfare. Because of the corruption and the brutal nature of Russian armed services, it no longer attracts youth to its ranks. Yet there is talk of a spiritual rebirth taking place in the military; it is estimated that one-third of the officer corps is Christian, with about five to ten percent strong believers. There is now a magazine called, "Faith and Mankind" ("Vera i Muzhestvo") that is billed as a "military Christian illustrated journal." Along with establishing ties to the Orthodox Church, "military authorities are seeking ties with other faiths, although they do not know exactly how to incorporate them," Whitten writes. Even with the strong Orthodox participation in the military, it should not be assumed that such involvement will necessarily be nationalist. One of the leaders in the military reform has been Fr. Gleb Yakunin, a former political prisoner who has been in the forefront of criticizing the rightist Orthodox trend. (Chronicles, 934 North Main St., Rockford, IL 61103)

#### ISLAMIC UPDATE

#### MUSLIM LEADERS UNITED ON ANTI-TERRORIST VIEWS

\* There appears to be a growing consensus among Muslim leaders and politicians that violence and terrorism are unacceptable, according to the Wall Street Journal (December 15). The newspaper reports that "amid bloody insurgencies in Turkey, Egypt and Algeria," the 52-member Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a "code of conduct" at its recent summit in Casablanca, Morocco that urges member states "not to host, train, arm, finance or provide facilities" to violent groups. In the past the organization has dodged the controversial issue of whether Islam sanctions political violence in certain situations. Although the OIC is powerless to enforce its positions in the Islamic world, the summit serves as a sounding board for the leaders of the world's 1.1 billion Muslims. "These meetings are usually nothing more than powwows for the Muslim leaders. But this year is different. For the first time, there is a dominant voice saying, 'Terrorism and extremism are un-Islamic,'" says Egyptian diplomat Tahsin Bashir. Orthodox Muslims may be taken aback about how Moroccan King Hassan II's plans to implement such views. He proposed that the OIC establish a "supreme body" to give definitive interpretations of Islamic law. Such a "magisterium" has never been a part of Islam and creating one is viewed by a Muslim activist as opening the door for politicians to coopt the faith for their own designs.

#### HEADSCARF CONTROVERSY SHOWS FISSURES, ASSIMILATION OF FRENCH MUSLIMS

\* An ongoing controversy over Muslim girls wearing head scarves in public schools in France highlights new tensions that have developed within Islam in that country, according to the Tablet (November 12), a British Catholic magazine. The controversy started in 1989 when a group of Muslim students started wearing traditional Islamic headscarves, setting off a national debate over whether Islam should be granted such privileges in the secular schools. Since then the public has become increasingly hostile to the Islamic headscarf, associating them with the Islamic civil war in Algeria, and the government recently banned them in



the schools.

The ensuing protests from Muslim youth have served to show the "growing search for an 'Islamic identity' among the young, the children of immigrants, including the better educated," writes Alain Woodrow. This age group is more devout than their elders and are more likely attracted to the small movement of Muslim radicals largely composed of Imams from abroad and those sympathetic with the Algerian Islamic revolutionaries. But Woodrow stresses that the overall trend has been toward assimilation and moderation in the last five years. Only 22 percent of Muslims are in favor of the Islamic headscarf at school today (as opposed to 30 percent in 1989); Only nine percent of French Muslims have a "good opinion" of the Algerian revolutionaries, with 62 percent seeing them as a "threat to democracy." More than three-quarters say they have no objection to a member of their family marrying a non-Muslim. (The Tablet, 48 Great Peter St., London, SW1P 2HB England)

**IRAN DEVELOPING  
OWN ISLAMIC  
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

\* Iran has recently introduced a series of reforms that suggest that some restrictions against women are starting to ease, according to the New York Times (December 2). Iranian women are still subject to fines, and sometimes flogging, for violating the Islamic dress code, and Islamic law denies equality between the sexes. But there have been noticeable changes, such as reviving a dormant family-planning program, state-proposed prenuptial contracts giving women the right to initiate divorce proceedings, and lifting restrictions against women in higher education to prepare women to work as engineers and assistants to judges. There has also been an increase of women in the workplace and universities (40 percent of university students are women today compared to 12 percent in 1978. A recent celebration of "Women's Week" in Teheran brought together women artists and gave awards to female factory workers. Katayon Ghazi reports that the country's younger generation of officials, "more open to the West, say the state wants to create Islamic programs that will be viewed as better than other alternatives," such as Western liberalism and feminism.

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**Inside This Issue:**

- Annual Review and Preview of Trends
- Tomorrow's Religious Leadership; Russia's Religious Military



# FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —

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## PRESSNOTES

\* The growing cooperation between Jewish conservatives and their Christian counterparts is demonstrated in the new journal Toward Tradition Perspectives. The journal is the publication of the new conservative Jewish organization Toward Tradition, a group which gained attention for its ads in newspapers last fall protesting attacks against the religious right by the Anti-Defamation League. The publication and its sponsoring group make the claim that Judaism is a conservative religion that, with its support of the free market and traditional morality, is a natural ally of the Christian right. While the quarterly has ties to Jewish neoconservatives (as represented by "Commentary" magazine), it is more activist oriented, featuring articles that press for the importance of a "Judeo-Christian ethical tradition." In a recent issue, the journal featured articles on a Jewish approach to teenage pregnancies, and men in the military. Subscriptions are on a donation basis. Send to: Toward Tradition Perspectives, P.O. Box 58, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

\* The Common Boundary Graduate Education Guide is more a field guide to the expanding number of organizations and publications exploring the interface of health, psychology and religion than a listing of colleges and other schools of higher education. The 185-page guide covers a diversity of programs, schools and groups whose only commonality is their attempt to relate healing with religion and spirituality, including: mind-body and holistic medicine; social work and spirituality; and alternative psychotherapies and research institutes working from Western and Eastern religious perspectives. The book also provides listings of periodicals in each of the subject areas. The guide costs \$19.95 and is available from: Common Boundary, 5272 River Rd., Suite 650, Bethesda, MD 20816.

\* Patricia Wittberg's The Rise And Fall Of Catholic Religious Orders (SUNY Press, State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246. \$19.95) is a comprehensive account of the past, present and probable future of these communities. Wittberg, a nun and Indiana University sociologist, traces the decline and renewal of Catholic religious communities throughout church history. She notes that these orders' current decline is especially dire because so many debilitating factors are at work-- there is little support of such ministry and vocations in the wider society; the church-based apparatus for creating such vocations and communities has deteriorated; and the orders themselves have lost a strong sense of identity. Wittberg concludes with a brief yet interesting section on the new conservative orders, such as reconstituted Franciscan groups and charismatic covenant communities, and how they may be introducing new models of religious life.

\* Yugoslavian Inferno (Continuum, 370 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017-6503. \$24.95), a new book by Paul Mojzes, provides the reader with in-depth background information on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, as well as a unique analysis of the religious situation in that battle-scarred region. Mojzes, a Yugoslavian by birth and a Protestant, views the conflict as "ethnoreligious" in that religious roots and feeling have intensified ethnic identity and pride. Mojzes finds blame among all the



religious groups (including his own), and has doubts about how well they can resolve these complex problems aside from carrying on their usual relief work. He adds that clergy in the former Yugoslavia find themselves inundated by the expectations of foreign ecumenical delegations who view them as having more influence among the warring parties than they actually have.

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

- 1) The controversial "Re-Imagining" gathering of 1993 has resulted in the formation of an ecumenical, independent Re-Imagining Community. The community, based in Minneapolis, has approximately 400 members in 49 states and a few other countries. As with the original conference, the community is devoted to reinterpreting and revisioning traditional male imagery of God and Jesus to include such feminine images as "Sophia," the spirit of wisdom. The community sponsored a conference in Minneapolis last October. (Source: Christian Century, November 16).
- 2) Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is being hailed in England as the "spiritual standard-bearer" of the attempt to forge new politics in the country. Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Britain, has made full use of the media, including popular television shows on the BBC, to put forth his view that both the state collective action of the left and the economic individualism of the right have failed, and that a "third way" has to be found which restores institutions, such as the family, that act as mediators between the state and the individual. Sacks' views are close to those of the communitarians in the U.S. Sack's dynamic personality and media savvy as well as the more practical nature of Jewish moral thought are some of the reasons given for his popularity among the British public. (Source: The Tablet, November 12)
- 3) The recent formation of the Alianza de Ministerios Evangelicos Nacionales (AMEN) shows the growing unity and cooperation developing among Latino evangelicals in North America. AMEN, which was formed in November at a summit meeting in Long Beach, Calif., is the first such cooperative organization for this fast-growing yet splintered segment of American Christianity-- ranging from the Assemblies of God and the Seventh Day Adventists to Methodists and Presbyterians. Among the functions of the new organization will be holding annual conventions to share common concerns facing the Latino evangelical community; establishing channels to share resources; and advocating for the development and recognition of Latino evangelicals. (Source: HABBM News Service, December)
- 4) The Planetary Mass has gained a following in Britain and the U.S. for its attempt to combine the "rave" youth culture and traditional Christian worship. The mass, which first took root at an Anglican church in Sheffield, England, models itself after rave dance parties, borrowing such features as light shows and "house" rock music, while substituting Christian rituals such as communion for the drug taking that usually takes place at such events. Matthew Fox, the Catholic-turned Anglican priest best known for his mystical ecology movement known as creation spirituality, has recently imported the Planetary Masses to the U.S. Fox is building a community of young people dedicated to operating a permanent "ritual center" for weekly Planetary Masses, ecumenical ritual and rites of passage in the San Francisco area. (Source: Salt Lake Tribune, November 5; Utne Reader, January/February)