# RELIGION WATCH

**A Newsletter Monitoring Trends In Contemporary Religion**

**Volume 10 Number 9** **July/August 1995**


## *AUM AFFAIR INTENSIFIES JAPAN'S RELIGIOUS CRISIS; AN ANALYSIS*

Evidence continues to accumulate showing that the poison gas attack on the Tokyo subway last March by the Japanese religious movement Aum Shinro Kyo was not an isolated incident but one in a series of violent actions by the upper eschelons of Aum. While it will take some time to understand the factors that led a group that was once seen as an offbeat but idealistic movement preaching asceticism and renunciation on to a path of violent conflict with society, the controversy is already having important repercussions for the state of religion in Japan. The Aum affair has damaged the image of religion in Japan, already tarnished by allegations of corruption and criticisms of social unconcern in recent years. Prominent scholar Yamaori Tetsuo points out that the established religions failed in the aftermath of the devastating Kobe earthquake in January, appearing to be incapable of providing a spiritual response or of offering comfort in its wake, while the Aum affair has confirmed the feelings of many (not just intellectuals, Marxists and others with a secular perspective) that religions are potentially dangerous and socially disruptive.

If the Kobe earthquake has reinforced the image of the older religions as socially moribund, the Aum affair has darkened the image of those new religions that offer an alternative means of religious expression in a socially constrained society. This popular perception of religions as potentially dangerous and threatening, especially after Aum, has helped fuel the movement towards greater state control of religion and of reform of the religious laws that since 1946 have guaranteed religions complete freedom from state interference. The government is planning to disband Aum as a religious organization, and to revise the religious laws so as to prevent future cases of religious deviance. While few people are likely to complain about the first of these actions, there is serious disquiet in many quarters about the second. The affair has also fueled criticism that the Japanese educational system is stifling the critical thinking and individualism that might prevent young Japanese from being enticed by religions such as Aum. Some people are now questioning the lack of any teaching on religion in the state schools; among the religious groups this writer has visited, there is wide support for some form of religious education in the schools.

Although some journalists had criticized Aum as a dangerous movement in the years before the events of March, 1995, it appears that scholars of new religions had remained somewhat unaware of the way the group was developing. One scholar, Shimada Hiromi, had visited and written about Aum and had been been impressed by the levels of commitment of members, which during the current controversy has brought him a good deal of criticism from the media. The reputation of religion scholars was not


Religion Watch is published monthly except once during July and August. Richard P. Cimino; Editor/Publisher. Erling Jorstad; Contributing Editor. A subscription in the U.S. is $19.95 per year. $25 for libraries. Write for foreign rates. Mailing address: P.O. Box 652, North Bellmore, NY 11710 Phone: (516) 785-6765 (ISSN 0886 2141) E-Mail: relwatch1@aol.com

helped by the intervention of American scholars specializing in new religions (though not, it should be stressed, experts in the Japanese field). In the aftermath of the gas attack and the government raids on Aum, and before the confessions showing Aum was the guilty party, American scholars Gordon Melton and James Lewis visited Japan, where they spoke of their concern for the rights of religious movements and the fears of government repression of religion. Since it was widely reported that their tickets to Japan had been paid for by Aum, and since the general public and media already believed Aum was guilty and hence ought to be repressed, their visit was not well received in Japan. Melton had earlier made the comment that, when the media reports scandal stories about religious movements, the substance of such stories normally proves to be less than the extent of the allegations; in this case, however, the evidence showed the actions of the movement to be even greater than had originally been rumored. As a result of all this, not only has the reputation and image of religion in general been damaged, but so has that of its scholars-- at precisely the moment when it is important for the voices of religion scholars to be heard who are concerned at the government's rhetoric about altering the nation's religious freedom laws.--*By Ian Reader, a professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Stirling, Scotland. Reader recently returned from a visit to Japan.*

---

*SECOND GENERATION HISPANIC EVANGELICALS CHARTING NEW PATH*

There is growing disaffection and alienation among the younger generations in Hispanic evangelical churches, although several ministries are trying new approaches to reach and keep this group, according to Regeneration Quarterly (Spring), a conservative Christian journal for young adults (see supplement). "Many Latino twentysomethings, especially those raised in the U.S. by immigrant parents, reject their parents' church in the same way their parents reject the mainline Catholic and Protestant churches. This phenomenon manifests itself most clearly among Latino Protestants," Rodolpho Carrasco writes. Recent studies have found a large number of inactive members or dropouts in Hispanic evangelical churches; only three out of 10 Latinos attend church weekly, but "for Latino twentysomethings, that figure is closer to two out of 10." The main reason for the alienation among young Latinos is that the majority of Hispanic Protestant churches "cater to the first, immigrant generation...Spanish is used primarily to the exclusion of English. The service may last two or three hours. The atmosphere tends to reflect a stern fundamentalism characterized by stringent dress codes...and a heaven-and-hell theology preached frequently. The elders, nearly always male, often act in an authoritarian fashion." Younger Latino generations influenced by American culture prefer a more relevant message and style in church, and especially press for more use of English.

While there may be something of a "brain drain" in Hispanic churches as Latinos switch to Anglo churches (it has been estimated that as many as 1.5 million have switched), Carrasco writes that many do not stay in such congregations. Young Latinos feel that Anglo congregations often do not have the "intimacy in worship and church life," as well as cultural understanding of them. But both Catholics and Protestants are developing new ministries for Latino twentysomethings. "Springing up all over the Catholic Church are renewal Catholic churches that marry Pentecostal-type worship expression, free use of English and Spanish, and a greater level of personal involvement with traditional Catholic theology and community." Such conservative groups as Hombre Nuevo, operated by the conservative Legionnaires of Christ, is known for engaging, rather than

condemning, popular culture to draw in Latino Catholics. Among evangelical Protestants, there are a number of congregations using English and more contemporary music. At a national level, the Southern Baptist Network 2000 focuses on planting churches among acculturated second and third generation Hispanics. The Hispanic Association for Billingual, Bicultural Ministries has built a network of church and parachurch ministries attempting to reach all groups of Hispanic Christians. (Regeneration Quarterly, P.O. Box 587, Princeton, NJ 08542-0587)

---

*CHURCH-STATE RULINGS TO ENCOURAGE MORE ACCOMODATION OF RELIGION BY STATE?*

After months of speculation by church-state observers, the Supreme Court recently issued three decisions on highly controversial cases that will likely have an impact on religious freedom and expression. Easily the most explosive and important of these decisions was the ruling (in Rosenberger vs. University of Virginia) which stated that the University of Virginia was constitutionally required to subsidize a student Christian magazine on the same basis as it subsidized any other student publication In this case, a student, Robert Rosenberger, applied to the university for $5,800 to cover the publication costs of a new magazine, "Wide Awake"-- a request which was turned down. It was claimed that for the state university to fund such a publication would mean that a governmental agency would be directly sponsoring religious activity with taxpayer money. Rosenberger argued that similar religious publications were subsidized. The New York Times (June 30) reports that the court majority ruled that the public funds for the journal were sent to the publisher, not the editor, and that the funds did not come from public funds but from a general student activity fee. The second case, that of whether a Ku Klux Klan cross could be erected on a public square at Christmas, was settled by a 7-2 majority in favor of the Klan. Opponents claimed the cross violated the constitutional separation of church and state. The Court held that such a symbol was permissible under the freedom of religion provision in the Constitution.

Finally, the Court ruled that student-led prayer at a public school commencement exercise was permissible in specific instances. The justices carefully pointed out that the case at issue was special because the last child of the family which had brought it to the courts had graduated, thus making the case moot. Observers point out that what has been established is a 5-4 conservative majority now able to put its imprimateur on cases once considered safe by those supporting strict separation of church and state, according to an article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune (June 30). The majority, made up of Justices William Rehnquist, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas have steered the Court in the direction of greater accomodation of public, taxpayer-funded support of formal religious expressions. All parties involved in the issue believe that the momentum established by the Virginia case will be used by conservatives to press for further freedom to express religious ideas in public life.-- *By Erling Jorstad, RW contributing editor.*

---

*NEW PILGRIMS ..ALKING LABYRINTHS*

A spiritual practice based around "walking labyrinths" is becoming widespread among a diversity of alternative and mainstream religious groups, according to the New Age Journal (June). Labyrinths have been

used as far back as ancient Greece, but are more well known in their use during the Crusades as church leaders created single path mazes on the floors of great European cathedrals for pilgrims to make symbolic journeys to Jerusalem. The more recent use of labyrinths started at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, where an estimated 70,000 people have participated in the practice, and it has spread to "churches, retreat centers, colleges, women's spirituality conferences, male mystery workshops [which is associated with the men's movement], even a convention of transpersonal psychologists," reports Lynn Murray Willeford. The reasons participants give for walking the labyrinths run the gamut. Some use it for meditation, while others consider it a form of "body prayer," or a way of seeking guidance and problem-solving. People who are mourning or ill have used labyrinths to find healing and to "process grief." Labyrinths open people up "to the spirit and divinity of life," says Grace Cathedral's Lauren Artress, who is now planning to establish small communities based around labyrinths, which can be linked during times of national celebration and mourning--"and at the turning of the millenium on New Year's Eve 1999." (New Age Journal, 42 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02147)

---

*HUMAN-ANIMAL RESEARCH CREATES BROAD RELIGIOUS COALITION*

a new coalition of a variety of religious groups has formed over the issue of patenting of human and animal life forms, although critics are questioning the effectiveness of such activism. The National Catholic Register (June 18) reports that the U.S. Patent Office's recent decision to grant patents for genetically engineered animals and human genes brought together Christian (liberal and conservative church leaders), Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist leaders to issue a statement condemning such plans. "We believe that humans and animals are creations of God, not humans, and as such should not be patented as human inventions," acccording to the "Joint Appeal Against Human and Animal Patenting." The coalition, whose chief organizers are the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, and the Foundation on Economic Trends (run by author Jeremy Rifkin), which targets bio-technological efforts, and is said to be the "broadest ever assembled on science and technology issues."

But the statement has encountering several critics. David Byers of the Catholic Bishop's conference said the organization did not sign it partly because the statement "draws no distinction between human and animal..." In Pacific News Service (June 12-16), Walter Truett Anderson writes that the statement and protests over using animals and human genes in genetic engineering are part of a long history of religious groups's ambivalence and fear over mixing human and non-human forms of life. Animals have historically figure heavily in tabboos as well as totems, as they are often portrayed as devils as well as gods. The religious opposition to Darwin's theory of evolution was often based on the rejection of apes and human beings sharing a family connection. The oppposition to a cowpox vaccination two centuries ago was led by clergymen "who believed it was an unnatural act, contrary to God's will, to give human beings a disease from cows" to cure smallpox. Anderson writes that "as more and more people step over the human-animal boundary, many may feel they have violated a taboo. But most will gladly accept the gift of non-human life," especially the many heart patients hoping that animal transplant research will ultimately eliminate the problem of lack of donors. (National Catholic Register, 15760 Ventura Blvd, Suite 1201, Encino, CA

91436-3001; Pacific News Service, 450 Market St., Rm. 204, San Francisco, CA 94105)

---

*FINDING A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY: YOUNG ADULTS CONVERT AND RETURN TO EASTERN ORTHODOXY*

*The following report is based on a study the editor of RW conducted of young adults converting and returning to Eastern Orthodoxy. It is part of a larger study of young adults adopting traditional Christian faiths that will appear in book form hopefully within the next year.*

With its ornate liturgy and rigorous spiritual disciplines, Eastern Orthodoxy does not at first seem to be a religious option among Americans known for their informality and individualism. But the once-exotic faith is holding an increasing attraction for Americans, as well as proving to be adaptive to the lifestyles and religious needs of young adults. The influence of converts is evident throughout Eastern Orthodoxy. For the past several years, about 40 percent of the seminarians at the Orthodox Church in America' St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, N.Y., have been converts to the faith. There have been several groups, such as a movement of former evanglicals once connected with Campus Crusade for Christ, who have converted to Orthodoxy en masse; more recently, several congregations from different backgrounds--from Anglican to independent charismatic--have made such a transition. While the new converts are all ages, baby boomers and younger believers are prominent leaders in this loosely-based convert movement. Although Orthodox churches have lost a significant number of their ethnic members, there has been a significant--and less publicized--movement of young adults returning to their Orthodox roots, especially in the Greek Orthodox Church.

It remains to be seen how Eastern Orthodoxy in America will be changed by these newcomers. Some see the influence of former evangelicals, especially such leaders as Peter Gillquist of the Antiochian Orthodox Church and pro-life leader Frank Schaeffer (the son of evangelical theologian Francis Schaeffer) in the Greek Orthodox Church, as adding a more activist, evangelistic edge to the American church. But it should be noted that there may be as many or more converts to Orthodoxy coming from the liturgical Episcopal, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches as from evangelicalism. Interviews conducted by the editor of RW with 10 young adults (ages 23-35) who have converted or returned to Eastern Orthodoxy, suggest that converts and returnees are far from a monolithic group. The interviews, (which were conducted with members of the Orthodox Church in America, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church) may not be statistically representative of those adopting Orthodoxy, but the parishes and groups from which the young adults were selected mirror many of the trends and views found in American Orthodox circles.

Most of the young adults' initiation into Orthodoxy was not very exotic or mystical. The bookshelves and tables of their homes and parishes were often filled with pamphlets and books explaining the faith in straightforward terms. Reading such literature played a large part in drawing seekers to the faith. But while a good deal of independent reading and searching drew many of the young adults to Orthodoxy, it was the liturgy and spiritual disciplines of the faith, such as fasting and formal prayers, that kept them there. Jill, a 29-year-old graduate student, had converted to Christianity through the Episcopal Church while she was a

college student. While she was living a semi-monastic lifestyle and attending an Anglican church, she went to an Orthodox service out of curiosity. "I immediately felt at home...There was the internal sense that prayer was going on there." As an Orthodox Christian she values the corporate morning and evening prayers as well as fasting "because it's part of the church discipline. Before [as an Episcopalian], I felt like this lone spiritual athlete. It was voluntary and I had all these standards I set for myself. Now there's just this ordinariness about being Orthodox; I'm just part of the community."

All of the young adults interviewed had strong ties to their parishes and priests. The priests often served as "spiritual confessors" to these young adults providing them with both spiritual direction and counseling as well as absolution. Such spiritual direction as well as the disciplines of prayer and fasting were often cited as contributing to their psychological well-being. Mariame, a 32-year-old filmaker, said that since she has been in the Orthodox church and practiced its spiritual disciplines, she has been better able to concentrate on her work and other activities, such as reading. The habit of prayer, such as in regularly saying the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner"), helps her focus her mind and avoid distractions. The connection between psychological health and spirituality sometimes sounded more contemporary than traditional. Wendy, a 26-year-old graduate student, said that when she first attended an Orthodox service, she heard a chanted prayer calling for the healing of evil memories. "I thought that was so cool to pray for something like that. I also remember thinking, 'Wow, that's healthy.' I had been through a 12-step program and that was a major emphasis there."

Most of the young adults returning to their Orthodox roots also put more of an emphasis on spirituality rather than ethnicity. John, a 28-year-old waiter, was born into the Greek Orthodox faith, but during adolescence only attended church sporadically. While in college he became interested in Christianity and joined the Greek Orthodox young adult organization. Yet he often experienced doubts about his faith and considered trying non-Orthodox churches. It was during this time that he read the book "Becoming Orthodox," by former evangelical Peter Gillquist. He said, "Gillquist traced the origins of the church back to Christ. He presented just the facts... The book gave me concrete evidence of the truth of Orthodoxy." John said that in some parishes he finds the emphasis on Greek ethnicity getting more attention than spirituality; most of his associations are with non-Greek Orthodox groups. His main criterion for finding a wife is that she be devoutly Orthodox; a Greek background is of little importance. Rev. Angelo Ardimaz of the young adult ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese estimates that 50 to 75 percent of Greek Orthodox young people drop out of parish life during college years and in their 20s. As such disaffected young adults reach their late 20s, about 30 to 50 percent return to active parish life which revolves more around spiritual concerns than ethnic ones. Many drop out in the first place "because all they're finding is ethnicity in their parishes," Ardimaz said. When these young adults returnees become active in parishes, they tend to downplay the Greek ethnic element of the faith.

While the young adults interviewed derived a strong sense of community from the liturgy and spiritual disciplines, they were far less united in lifestyles and on social and political issues, in some ways mirroring the decentralized nature of Orthodoxy. The interviewees came to Orthodoxy

with diverse lifestyles and social outlooks and most appeared to have retained these values years after having embraced the faith. . Mariame, for example, has retained her pre-Orthodox interest in popular music forms--such as punk rock, reggae, and rap-- and experimental art. Most of the interviewees kept their old friendships while also forming a new circle of friends at their Orthodox parishes. They tended to steer a middle ground on volatile issues such as feminism and gender roles. While critical of some forms of feminism for portraying women as powerless and victims, Mariame said that "Women should do what they want. I have no problem with a man staying home and the woman working. Not all men are the same. It's hard to generalize because we're all different. We all have characteristics of the other [sex] in us." On issues such as welfare, health reform, environmentalism, and national defense, the young adults defied easy classification; often they held a "conservative" position on one issue and a "liberal" position on another.

Since turning to Orthodoxy, most of the young adults had not become any more poltically concerned or active--several became less so. Jill said that since becoming Orthodox she tends to "live on a more local, personal level. If I'm going to be against abortion, it's probably not going to be marching. Instead, I'd adopt a baby. I'm not likely to go out and protest for peace as I did in the past; now, I'd treat people nicer on the line in the cafeteria." She added that Orthodoxy's focus on the individual and personal responsibility rather than abstractions may be a factor in the move away from political activism. Their disdain for politics intensified when the church engaged in such activity. Jill was one of the few young adults who accepted women's ordination, but she backed away from vocal support for this issue because it might cause political divisions in the church. More unexpectedly, a segment of the young adults were wary of church involvement in the pro-life movement. Mariame recounted that when a bishop spoke on pro-life issues, she and several worshippers walked out of the church in protest. "There we were all spiritual and boom!-- abortion. The church is no place to teach politics. The church shouldn't worry about being contemporary. It's timeless."

Several young adults interviewed were more supportive of the pro-life movement (though not involved in activism), and Orthodox church leaders have shown support for the cause. Yet, for Mariame and others, abortion was viewed as the most politically explosive issue today. Thus, bringing the pro-life movement into the church would serve to politicize Orthodoxy and dilute its spiritual content. For most of the young adults, Orthodoxy represented a transcendent alternative to and, in some cases, an escape from the culture wars and the political conflicts in the church and society. The inward turn toward spiritual concerns and the shift away from politics may not define all Orthodox believers; recent former evangelical converts seem to be of a more activist, politically conservative bent. But even such a staunch pro-life activist and conservative culture warrior as Frank Schaeffer in his recent lectures and writings has said the most important task of Orthodoxy in America is to revive its monastic tradition. Schaeffer has also been speaking out against materialism and the "American way of life" much more than he did in his pre-Orthodox days.

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

*RESEARCH SHOWS RELIGION'S IMPORTANCE FOR CHILDREN*

* There has been a recent wave of research claiming that religious faith

is a critical part of childrens' everyday life. In the social sciences, many psychologists influenced by Freudian theories holding that religion is an illusion have been dismissive of religious views and feelings of children. An article in the Grand Rapids Press (May 6) reports that psychologists such as Bernard Spilka of the University of Denver, David Elkind of Tufts University, and David Heller, author of "The Children's God," have conducted a number of recent studies suggesting that personal faith contributes to the mental health and self-esteem of children. Heller says that faith is "essential in terms of believing that the world can be a good place, a safe place, a loving place." This is especially the case today where in the midst of broken families, "Life has really gotten sort of unanchored. Children, youth today, are trying to find anchors," says Spilka. Meanwhile, a recent study in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (June) provides intriguing ideas about how children get their ideas about God and how such faith may be changing due to shifts in society.

The study, conducted by Bradley Hertel and Michael J. Donahue, finds that there is a close connection between how a child views God and how parents relate to their child. By analyzing data collected on families during the 1980s, Hertel and Donahue find that the parents' view of God affected the youths' impressions of the parent and also shaped the youths' images of God. The prevalent image of God the researchers found among youth was one of love rather than one of authority and these views showed a strong association with parents' God images and youth images of parents (as being loving rather than exercising authority). The researchers confirm the finding that mothers are the primary religious influence on children. But that may be changing as mothers have increasingly joined the work force. Hertel and Donahue find that married women's employment reduces levels of church attendance for themselves, their husbands, and most likely, their children. This may mean that such a decline in women's participation in organized religion "could reduce the tendency for them and their husbands to pass God images on to their children. We do not foresee a time when mothers will no longer be the dominant socializers, but significant erosion in mothers' and fathers' commitment to the religious socializaton of children is a very real possibility." (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1365 Stone Hall, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1365)

---

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


Inside This Issue:

# FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

*— A Bi-Monthly Supplement of Religion Watch —*

July/August 1995

**PRESSNOTES**

* The recent launching of Regeneration Quarterly suggests that the twentysomething generation is not completely indifferent to theology and classic Christian traditions. The quarterly seeks to bring together young conservative Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians to discuss and debate issues that have divided and united these traditions. Social and ethical issues, such as abortion, are frequently addressed in the magazine, especially since they represent common concerns for these different groups of Christians. The spring issue of the magazine is especially noteworthy as it focuses on the spiritual journeys of twentysomethings and younger baby boomers, with reports on conversions to and from Anglicanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, evangelicalism, and Catholicism. In one article, Johnny Seel notes how many of these young "pilgrims" can easily move from one of these faiths to the other (what he calls "confessional mobility")-- a pattern that fits in with the individualistic lifestyles of their secular counterparts. A subsciption is $19.95 and is available from: Regeneration Quarterly, P.O. Box 587, Princeton, NJ 08542.

* The spring issue of AMPO: Japan-Asia Quarterly Review focuses on feminism in Japanese society and how this movement has become a strongly secular phenomenon. The issue reports that Japanese feminist leaders put a heavy emphasis on economic equality in the world of business and moral reformulation to end Japanese prostitution. There is a clear absence of involvement in such a cause by any of the major religions in Japan. Long the domain of male priests, the new feminist leadership charges that religious communities provide mainly the "internal" rewards of spirituality rather than pressing for change on such issues as employment, family responsibilities, and prostitution. Observers believe that Western feminist voices, highly popular among the new activist leaders, will continue to shape the Japanese feminist agenda along American lines rather than maintaining the struggle against the leadership of organized Shinto religion. For more information, write to: AMPO: Japan-Asia Quarterly Review, Pacific Asia Resource Center, P.O. Box 5250, Tokyo International, Japan.-- **By Erling Jorstad.**

* As ecology continues to find a prominent place among religious groups, two periodicals founded fairly recently show how different kinds of Christians are approaching environmental issues. The Green Cross (10 E. Lancaster Ave., Wynnewood, PA 19096. $25), a "Christian Environmental Quarterly" published by the Evangelicals for Social Action, demonstrates the recent and flourishing evangelical interest in ecology. The magazine features articles arguing that the Christian tradition and the Bible support ecological concern, as well as providing practical advice and examples of ecological activism. As might be expected, the publication is critical of New Age ecological perspectives and visions. The Winter '95 issue features an article on how the Church of the Savior, Wayne, Pennsylvania, established a nature center that integrates "pastoral care and creation care." The magazine has also established chapters around the country (going by the same name) to encourage evangelicals to take

ecological action on local issues.

Earthlight (1558 Mercy St., Mountain View, CA 94041. $15), a quarterly magazine of "spirituality and ecology," comes from a Christian left perspective that draws heavily on New Age and secular views. Published by the Quaker Pacific Yearly Meeting, the magazine mirrors wider developments in the religious left (especially, it appears, within liberal Quakerism), as it marries a strong social activist bent--emphasizing peacemaking and condemning capitalism--with ecological concerns of other world and alternative religions, particularly those that view God as immanent (or near to or part of the earth) rather than transcendent. The magazine provides news and short articles profiling groups that are modeling this ecological-spiritual vision. There appears to be a degree of tension between the Christian environmentalism of Green Cross and that of Earthlight, as two articles in the Spring issue criticize the former group as being too exclusivist and negative toward non-Christian views.

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

1) The Cry For Renewal and the Maston Colloquium are the most recent statements issued in the past year to counter the growing influence of the religious right. The "Cry for Renewal," was issued in late May by an ecumenical group of more than 80 Christian leaders who condemned the close identification of the religious right with the new Republican majority in Washington and also criticized the religious liberal alliance with the Democratic Party. Organized by left evangelicals Jim Wallis of Sojourners magazine and Anthony Campolo of Eastern College, the coalition plans to form a "progressive evangelical caucus" to represent an alternative to the religious right at conservative evangelical events, encourage student activism through churches rather than campuses, and convene town meetings to address community problems. The Maston Colloquium brought together mostly Southern Baptist leaders advocating strict church-state separation who charged that the "radical Religious Right" threatens personal liberties, distorts the gospel and undermines democracy. The group was convened in Dallas by Foy Valentine, former director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and a leader among moderate Southern Baptists. The colloquim and The "Cry for Renewal" coalition joins the Interfaith Alliance, a group organized last year, as recent efforts by Christians to stem the influence of the religious right. (Source: Washington Post, May 24; The Christian Century, June 21-28)

2) A team of specialists, headed by Professor Diana M. Eck of Harvard University Divinity School and Harvard University, has launched a major research project to document the rapid growth of non-Western religions in the U.S. Using 25 cities as their sample, the researchers will examine data from demographic sources, and conduct case studies to chart the enormous spread of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities in all parts of the country. Eck notes that the new surge of world religions came after 1965 when U.S. immigration laws were revamped to allow large numbers from Asia and Middle East to enter. Since then the presence of these new believers has been widely noted but not documented. The team is assembling materials for study at Harvard University, as well as bringing out guidebooks on these religious communities. (Source: Chronicle of Higher Education, June 9)-- **By Erling Jorstad**