"We look upon the Black Panther movement as a very positive one, but one that was re-pressed by white society," explained a Warner Brothers vice president.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Secret Cabinet of Dr. Foucault

A Survey of Recent Articles

Little known outside the academy, Michel Foucault (1926–84) is an exemplary figure to many tenured radicals within it and an influential one to many other scholars. "Whatever else Foucault was, he was a great Nietzschean hero," Princeton's Alexander Nehamas writes in the *New Republic* (Feb. 15, 1993). That is just what the French historian and philosopher, who died of AIDS at the age of 57, ardently tried to be, contends James Miller, author of *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (1993). Foucault struggled all his life "to honor Nietzsche's gnomic injunction, 'to become what one is,' " Miller says in a *Salmagundi* (Winter 1993) symposium occasioned by his controversial book, which details, among other things, Foucault's homosexuality, sadomasochism, drug-taking, and attempts at suicide.

"The inner logic of [Foucault's] philosophical odyssey, and also of his public political statements and actions," Miller contends, "is unintelligible apart from his lifelong, and highly problematic, preoccupation with limiting the limits of reason, and finding ways—in dreaming, at moments of madness, through drug use, in erotic rapture, in great transports of rage, and also through intense suffering—of exploring the most shattering kinds of experience, breaching the boundaries normally drawn between the unconscious and conscious, order and disorder, pleasure and pain, life and death; and in this way, starkly revealing how distinctions central to the play of true and false are pliable, uncertain, contingent."
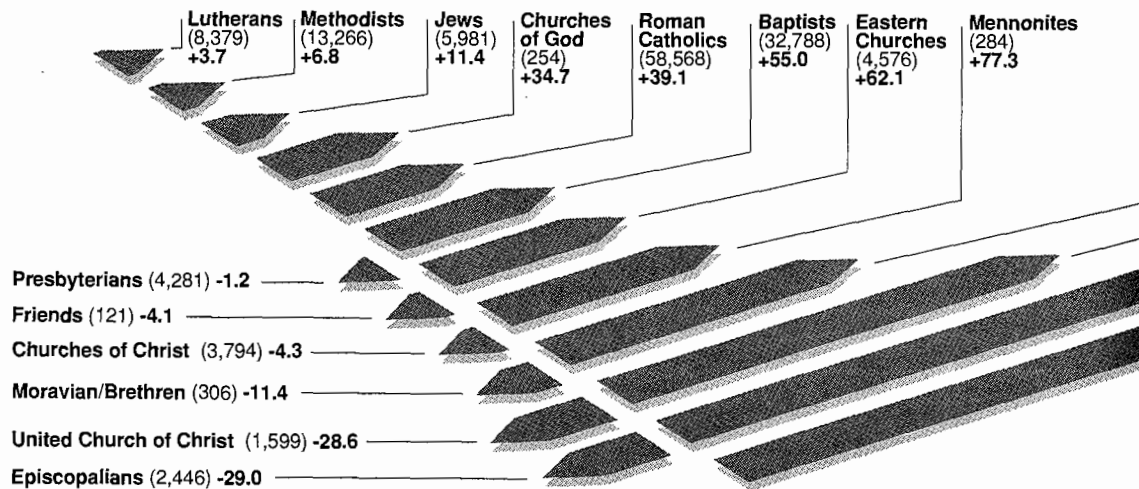
Foucault, who occupied the chair of History of Thought at the prestigious Collège de France in Paris and lectured widely on both sides of the Atlantic, contended that what is deemed "knowledge" at any one time is little more than the dominant interests' convenient fiction. Those in power manipulate social attitudes so as to define such categories as insanity, illness, sexuality, and criminality, in ways that allow them to oppress "deviants." "More often than most people dream," Miller adds, "we can *change* the rules of the game . . . even if few of us ever will, inhibited as we are by the conventions of ordinary language, common sense and conscientiousness, reinforced by the threat of punishment and a more diffuse, hence insidious set of fears: of being branded as queer, crazy, abnormal."

Foucault's thought had two basic components, Alexander Nehamas explains. "The first, derived from Nietzsche and never abandoned, was that every human situation is a product of history, though we may be convinced that it is a natural fact." Insanity, for example, has no fixed character but has been "constructed" in different ways throughout history. The second component, which Foucault modified in later years, "was a relentless suspicion of 'progress.' He had an uncanny ability to see the dark side of every step toward the light, to grasp the price at which every advance had to be bought. And he believed that the price was never a bargain."

Power was Foucault's obsession, observes Roger Kimball, managing editor of the *New Criterion* (March 1993): "He came bearing the bad news in bad prose that every institution, no matter how benign it seems, is 'really' a scene of unspeakable domination and subjugation; that efforts at enlightened reform—of asylums, of prisons, of society at large—have been little more than alibis for extending state power;

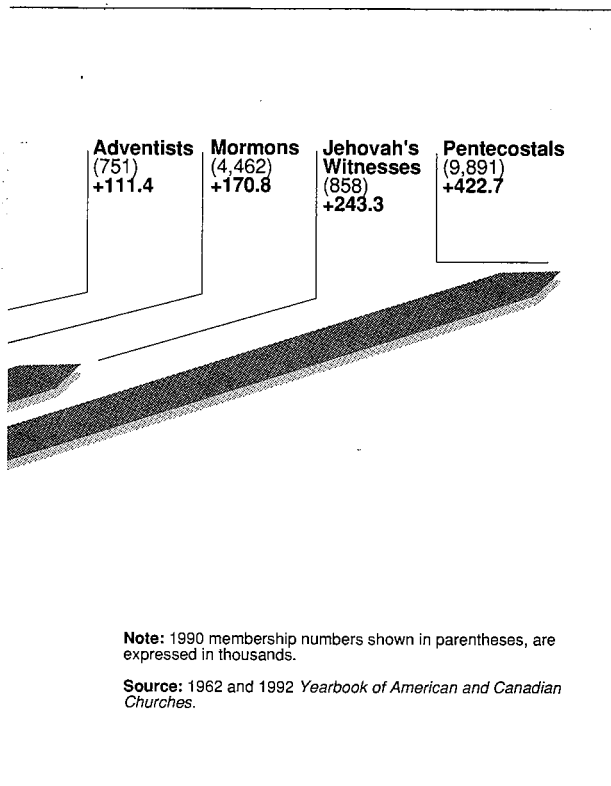# Change in the Churches (Percent change in membership, 1960-90)

Lutherans (8,379) +3.7	Methodists (13,266) +6.8	Jews (5,981) +11.4	Churches of God (254) +34.7	Roman Catholics (58,568) +39.1	Baptists (32,788) +55.0	Eastern Churches (4,576) +62.1	Mennonites (284) +77.3

Presbyterians (4,281) -1.2

Friends (121) -4.1

Churches of Christ (3,794) -4.3

Moravian/Brethren (306) -11.4

United Church of Christ (1,599) -28.6

Episcopalians (2,446) -29.0

U.S. population grew by 39 percent between 1960 and 1990, and overall church membership rose by 37 percent, reports the Roper Center's Public Perspective *(March-April 1993). But while membership in the evangelical denominations mushroomed, the "mainline" Protestant churches lost ground.*

that human relationships are, underneath it all, deadly struggles for mastery; that truth itself is merely a coefficient of coercion." Asked Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977): "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"

Of all Foucault's books, *Discipline and Punish* was the most influential in America, "where its allusions to hidden 'power' fit so well with the paranoid style of American politics," New York University's Mark Lilla observes in the *Times Literary Supplement* (March 26, 1993). In France, however, where it was published in 1975, Foucault's book was received with less enthusiasm. The preceding year, "a far more influential work on the modern prison was published, [Aleksandr] Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. . . . In the face of this compelling account of physical and mental torture directed by a regime many in France still considered the vanguard of social progress, it was difficult to maintain that Western classrooms were prisons and still re-

main within the bounds of good taste."

"Discontinuities" are also evident in Foucault's political career, as Princeton's Alan Ryan notes in the *New York Review of Books* (April 8, 1993): "He was a member of the French Communist Party for three years in the early 1950s, and an ardent anti-Communist thereafter; he was *persona* sufficiently *grata* with governments of the Fourth and Fifth Republics to be appointed to posts in Sweden and Poland that were both cultural and diplomatic in nature." He "missed" the French students' rebellion of May 1968, when he was teaching in Tunis, but "made up for lost time by siding with the 'Maoist' ultra-left in the early 1970s." He shocked even some of the Maoists with his notion that the working class and its allies should punish their class enemies without even bothering to create "people's tribunals" to find them guilty of anything in particular. He supported the Iranian Revolution, even after the draconian nature of the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime had become evident. "In his

Adventists	Mormons	Jehovah's Witnesses	Pentecostals
(751)	(4,462)	(858)	(9,891)
+111.4	+170.8	+243.3	+422.7

Note: 1990 membership numbers shown in parentheses, are expressed in thousands.

Source: 1962 and 1992 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches.*

rhetoric. . . . What positive conception he possessed of a less oppressive society remains mysterious."

Some of Foucault's admirers fear that Miller's book will have an unwholesome effect. It vividly demonstrates "why it is that whenever those of us who feel ourselves to be in Foucault's embattled position, or who share his political vision, hear those who don't do either invoke the notion of 'truth,' we reach for our revolvers," complains David M. Halperin, an English professor at MIT, in *Salmagundi*. The idea of "truth," in his view, as in Foucault's, is only a tool of the oppressor.

Should Miller have refrained from reporting the seamier details of Foucault's life? "At issue here," notes *Dissent*'s (Spring 1993) Richard Wolin, "is something much larger than how to understand Foucault's life and work—it involves a clash of world views. Poststructuralists, following Nietzsche, do not believe in something like 'the truth.' Instead, there exist only 'points of view' that are backed by determinate interests. . . . The poststructualist standpoint invites an ominous practice: where 'truth'—however one chooses to define it—fails to coincide with the agenda of political radicalism, it should be suppressed. Yet, when truth becomes solely a matter of pragmatics or interest, as it was for Foucault . . . we risk losing the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, the just from the unjust, good from evil."

last years he spoke out on behalf of gay rights, and against the abuse of human rights in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The skepticism of his philosophical account of personal identity and individuality made no difference to his political

Will Televangelism Be Reborn?

"The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism" by Jeffrey K. Hadden, in *The Annals* (May 1993), the American Acad. of Political and Social Science, 3937 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Since the sex scandals of the late 1980s that brought down TV preachers Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, evangelical religious broadcasting seems to have gone into a tailspin. Whereas in 1986 more than 15 million households a week tuned in to religious broadcasts, by early 1992 only 9.5 million did. Contributions have fallen off sharply. Yet, says Hadden, a University of Virginia sociologist, "televangelism" may well rise again.

Before their recent decline, evangelicals dominated the religious airwaves for two decades. Passionately eager to proselytize, evangelical ministers did not hesitate to go on the air and plead for money to spread their message.