

December 31, 1973

Join Children of God

Former Baptists Fear
Kohoutek, to Flee U.S.

By Tim Nicholas

ATLANTA (BP)--A young mother of three and her husband, both former Southern Baptists, are packing their bags to leave the country on what they believe is America's eve of destruction heralded by the Comet Kohoutek.

For several months now, Moses David (Berg), middle-aged mentor of the otherwise youthful Christian sect, the Children of God, reports a vision foretelling the destruction of the United States by God.

The possible instrument is the Comet Kohoutek, he says.

For more than a year the Christian group, which believes in a strict adherence to the literal Scripture, has been warning Americans that God was readying to judge America. Now, says Moses David, our time is up.

Moses David estimates America's judgment day to be in late January 1974--when the Comet Kohoutek is at its closest proximity to the earth.

In a copyrighted Children of God tract, Moses David says, "Whatever its effects and meaning, like a boomerang from the hand of its Maker it will slice through our lives and return to the hand of Him that flung it, as it begins to depart from us by the end of January 1974, having accomplished its mission, wreaked its havoc or portended its crises and decided its events, whatever these may be!"

The young mother, who said she and her husband still hold basic Baptist beliefs, was in Atlanta recently saying goodbye to her parents as she prepared to flee to Europe.

Chalcedony, the biblical name she has adopted, said, "I don't think Moses David believes the comet is going to touch the earth, but sun spots can cause blackouts, and when you have something as big as the comet any number of things could happen--a magnetic imbalance or floods or earthquakes."

She and her husband, Reuben, and their pre-school age children Abiel, Carmi and Gentle Heart, will be leaving their Knoxville, Tenn., home soon.

"We're pretty sure we're going to Europe, but aren't sure where because we don't know the needs of all the different colonies in Europe and South America."

The couple had planned to leave the U.S. a year ago, but "the Lord showed us not to leave." She was sued for an old debt and the payment took all their traveling money.

"Not all the Children of God are leaving," she added. "We've got refuges in the mountains and everywhere in the U.S. stocked with food and warm clothing. They're for people (survivors) who ask for help when they really turn to the Lord and see the truth."

She added, "We're not saying 'get out', but you should leave if you don't know it's God's will for you to stay."

Chalcedony said her mother isn't going with them, "but she's going to be getting ready, like stocking up on warm clothing."

Unlike some other parents of Children of God members, Chalcedony said her mother has helped her in the past through prayer. Other parents have been accused of kidnapping the Children from their homes countercharging kidnapping and brainwashing on the part of the Children of God themselves.

A former college student, Chalcedony said she lost interest in schooling and in organized religion. "I backslid," she said. But since joining the Children of God, her faith "has been shored up.

"My husband and I don't believe anything different than when we were Baptists. We were brought up in Southern Baptist homes, but we both believe that sometimes it's so burdensome to be so organized that you can't do anything.

"We believe we don't have time to go through four years of seminary. We believe we can function without that," Chalcedony said.

Chalcedony joined the Children of God around Christmas of 1970 after she had come back to the U.S. from a jaunt in Europe. She hooked up with a "swinging roommate" who convinced her that it wasn't right for a 23-year-old girl, single or otherwise, to be a virgin.

She became pregnant and started taking drugs "all in the same week. It wasn't real heavy drugs--just mild diet pills--but that was drugs to me," she said.

"I thought I was really getting into the world," she added.

The former Baptist said she had been visiting the House of Judah, a small Christian home group but had no intention of joining. "I thought they were jerks," she said.

"Everything started falling out from under me," she said. She had just bought a new car and Christmas presents. "I was in debt everywhere I turned." Her boyfriend, the unwed father, refused to help financially, so she asked House of Judah leaders for help.

"If I hadn't been pregnant I probably wouldn't have joined them," she said.

Reuben was a guard at their Atlanta girls' home, Temple of Still Waters. "He came up to me while I was pregnant and said he believed the Lord wanted us to get to know each other. So we did and fell in love and were married."

In early 1971, the group from Atlanta's House of Judah were won over to the still fledgling Children of God. Many, including Chalcedony and Reuben, went to the Children's former ranch headquarters in Texas to live.

The couple and their children have since been to Burlington, Wash.; Baltimore, Md.; Washington, D.C.; Homestead, Fla.; and New York City.

"We use driveaway cars, where people pay to have their cars moved around. All we do is pay for gas," she said.

A driveaway car won't fill the bill in getting Chalcedony, Reuben and their brood to Europe, but whatever the expense, she believes in Moses David's visions of doom and is willing to evict herself and her family from their homeland, which they believe is going to be punished by God for spiritual evil.

The Children of God await the coming of Kohoutek.

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CORRECTION

In Baptist Press feature mailed Dec. 28, 1973, headlined Baptist Churches Begin In the 'Craziest' Places, please change the third line of graph one to read--sanctuary for the Reese-Antelope Valley Baptist Chapel in Nevada.--Thanks.

--Baptist Press



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December 31, 1973

Charlotte Church Ordains Woman, Despite Delay

CHARLOTTE, N. C. (BP)--Although thwarted by a snow storm on the first attempt, Dec. 16, Independence Hill Baptist Church here followed through, Dec. 30, with the ordination of Miss Arlene Westbrook to the ministry.

Miss Westbrook, 24, who will graduate from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C., in May, is believed to be the seventh woman in the Southern Baptist Convention and the second in North Carolina to be ordained a minister by an SBC-affiliated church.

"It was a routine ordination service, with no reference to the fact she was a woman," said Lawrence Childs, superintendent of missions for the Mecklenburg Baptist Association, who delivered the charge to the church during the service.

He noted, however, that Galatians 3:28 was printed on the order of worship: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

John Durham, Miss Westbrook's professor of Old Testament interpretation at Southeastern Seminary, where she will earn a master of divinity degree, preached the ordination sermon, and John Perry, pastor of Independence Hill Baptist Church and a fellow student at Southeastern, delivered the charge to the candidate.

"All the response I've had since the news (of the proposed ordination) was released has been good," said Miss Westbrook, who has served as youth director at Independence Hill Church for the past two summers.

"I'm thankful for the support of the people at the church. It's really meant a lot."

She said there was an inaccurate report in a local newspaper that she would be ordained as minister of the Independence Hill Church. "That's not true," she added. "I'm not certain exactly what I'll do after graduation."

Miss Westbrook, who is considering the possibility of working with young people or teaching, may also enter Southeastern Seminary's doctor of ministries degree program.

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BWA Leaders Note Growth Among Romanian Baptists

12/31/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--Evidence of consistent growth throughout the Baptist churches in Romania was noted by two Baptist World Alliance (BWA) leaders who returned from there recently following a visit to the Romanian government's Department of Cults in Bucharest.

C. Ronald Goulding, BWA associate secretary in London, and David Russell, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, made the trip to discuss various matters affecting the relationship between the state of Romania and Baptist churches there.

Russell, a member of the BWA executive committee, and Goulding went to Romania in response to reports of church-state problems in that country.

Goulding, while not naming specific problems, said he and Russell were received by the chairman and vice chairman of the Romanian government's Department of Cults for a three-hour

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"full and frank discussion of questions raised in a recently produced paper by Joseph Ton on the relationship between the Baptist churches and the state. Ton is the pastor of three Baptist churches in the industrial town of Ploesti, about 40 miles from Bucharest.

"Some of the problems raised have already been resolved, and others are due for consideration," Goulding said.

About 130,000 Baptists live in Romania, the third largest Baptist population (exceeded by the Soviet Union and Great Britain) among the European countries, according to Goulding.

He noted "evidence of consistent growth in the churches in Romania" and said new buildings are under construction in Timosoara, Medias, Sibiu and Dej.

Robert S. Denny, BWA general secretary, said the Romanian ambassador in Washington, D. C. helped arrange for the meetings in Bucharest.

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Rising Costs Force Cutback
For World Evangelism Meeting

12/31/73

LUSANNE, Switzerland (BP)--Baptists and others planning to attend the International Congress on World Evangelization, scheduled here July 16-25, 1974, have been advised that increasing costs have forced a reduction in the number of participants for the interdenominational meeting of evangelicals.

A decision to reduce the size of the meeting from 3,000 to 2,700 participants was made at a meeting of the congress administrative committee here.

Bishop A. Jack Dain of Sydney, executive chairman, announced the reduction in planned registrants and noted that the administrative committee session was held at a time of mounting world crisis.

The world's crises convinced members even more of the urgent need for the congress in spite of the forced cutback in participation, Bishop Dain said.

The committee, including laymen and clergymen from around the world, was faced specifically with increases in airline fares, among other cost increases. Panel members noted that the buying power of several currencies pledged in support of the congress have declined seriously since initial budgets were approved in 1972.

Bishop Dain said the number of participants will still be more than twice the size of the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, at which 1,200 persons registered. The 1974 meeting will be much more representative of international evangelical leadership, he said.

Participants for the congress are being selected on a quota system that takes into account all types of ministries, age, sex and lay or clergy status.

Final program plans were approved by the administrative committee as were arrangements for the Palais de Beaulieu, site of the congress. The committee also voted to open all parts of the program to accredited journalists.

In other action, the committee added two members to the congress planning team. They are W. Maxey Jarman of Nashville, a Southern Baptist layman and retired businessman, and Fritz Hoffman of Magdeburg, general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in the German Democratic Republic.

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CORRECTION

In third graph from end of Baptist Press story mailed Dec. 28, 1973, and headlined Church United in Tragedy Splits One Year Later, add the following sentence: Some observers say the theological differences--which included some members being involved with glossalalia--caused a breach of fellowship and brought about a leadership crisis. Neither Abington, who was pastor at the time, nor Burton, who was not called until November, were involved with the so-called charismatic movement.

--Thanks

Baptist Press