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New Sects Claim Allegiance  
Of Confused Young Persons

By George Sheridan

ATLANTA (BP)--Twenty-one-year-old Emily was searching for people who "made God a dynamic part of their lives."

She thought she found them in 1974 when she joined the Unification Church. Moving into a Charlotte, N.C., church center, Emily sold flowers from early morning until past midnight, raising about \$200 a day.

When she failed to meet her \$200 quota, she would be humiliated by leaders who made her feel she was disappointing God and denying people "the blessing of giving."

While at Charlotte, Emily also cooked breakfast and packed lunches for 40 people, getting up at 5 a.m. after only four or five hours sleep. She was continually tired. But she loved the work. "I felt needed," she said.

After more than a year and a half, Emily went to Washington, D.C., to participate in the church's Bicentennial rally at the Washington Monument.

There Emily met an old friend who urged her to visit her mother. The church gave Emily permission--a turning point in her religious pilgrimage.

Emily's mother arranged for a former member of the church to "deprogram" her. Emily resisted at first but then she "put the whole situation in God's hands."

Emily left the church in 1976.

Her experience with the Unification Church was much like those of many young persons dealing with the more than 1,300 new religions that emerged in the U. S. since 1965. These sects, ranging from Oriental philosophy to "Jesus people," have been the principle feature of a decade of religious resurgence in the U. S.

In addition to the Unification Church, they include Hare Krishna movement, the Church of Scientology, the Holy Order of Mans, The Way, the Divine Light Mission and followers of various gurus, meditation forms and even diets.

The groups surviving into the late 70's are generally small. The Unification Church numbers only about 3,000 core members. But hard-core, primarily young adherents make them more than "a transitory cultural aberration," says Jacob Neddleman, professor at San Francisco State University.

They are, instead, Neddleman says, "a central feature of the profound change through which America is passing."

According to a Gallup survey, most of the participants in the new sects are 18 to 24 years old. Of all the persons surveyed, only 25 percent are still involved. But that is enough to cause a slow rise in memberships.

The sects are also gaining financial stability. Several own vast tracts of real estate and major interests in financial and health institutions.

The Church of Scientology, one of the older "new" sects, was founded in 1954 by Ron L. Hubbard, a former Hollywood movie director and writer of science fiction. His religion is based on the assumption that humanity is basically good and seeks to survive, but is burdened with a painful past and by sins.

Hubbard left directorship of the church in 1966 but continues involvement in church operations and receives a large income from it. In May, 1977, the Church of Scientology claimed worldwide membership of 5.1 million.

Last year representatives of the Divine Light Mission (DLM) of child guru Maharaj Ji reported dramatic changes in philosophy and organization. The guru's extravagant trappings were largely eliminated; his dictatorial leadership status revised. Devotees no longer kiss his feet; the concept of him as God incarnate and perfect master is fading.

Recently the mission closed its health clinics and businesses except for a food cooperative in Denver, location of its headquarters. Its 1976 reports indicate some 300 persons live in DLM "ashrams." Monthly income, through gifts and earnings, totaled \$315,000, up from \$200,000 the previous year.

With headquarters on a farm in New Knowville, Ind., The Way Biblical Research Center was started in 1953 by director Paul Wierville. It came of age with the Jesus Movement in the early '70's.

The Way sends out "Word over the World (WOW) "ambassadors to the United States and other countries. Ambassadors practice healing and speaking in tongues. They charge for classes, sell books and tapes. Wierville denies the deity of Jesus.

The communal Children of God also arose with the Jesus Movement. While the sect seems to have faded in this country, "colonies" exist in many other countries.

About 1969, two predecessor groups, "Teens for Christ" and "Revolutionaries for Jesus," merged. Both had been dominated by David Brandt Berg--also known as "Moses" or "David Moses." Berg rests atop the Children of God pyramid.

As "God's saved people," the Children of God emphasize the last days. Converts are taught to mistrust any teachings but the sect's own.

Anyone can join the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in three immediate steps: chant the "maha-mantra"; observe the society's strictures against meat-eating, gambling, illicit sex and ingesting intoxicating substances (including drugs, alcohol, coffee and tobacco); and dedicate one's life to Krishna.

Between 3,000 and 5,000 persons live in the 30 Hare Krishna temples in the United States according to the New York temple public relations director. Perhaps three times that number attend the temple on weekends but are not full-fledged devotees.

Moon founded the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of the World Christianity--the Unification Church in Korea in 1954 and brought it to America in the early 70's. The church's guidebook is a "revelation given by God to Sun Myung Moon." The church claims centers in 120 American cities.

The theology and practices of the church have moved the National Council of Churches and several individual denominations to issue statements denying it is Christian.

Why are so many young persons attracted to these new religions?

Of several hundred Unification members surveyed by J. Stillson Judah, professor in the Graduate Theological Center in Berkeley, Calif., half were between age 22 and 26 when they joined the Unification Church. Most were college dropouts.

Fifty-two percent said their parents were regular church goers; 29 percent considered themselves Christian before joining. But few saw themselves as strong or active Christians.

More than a third had used hard drugs; 16.5 percent had arrest records, mainly for drug offenses. Before joining the Unification Church, 42.5 percent said they had opposed authority. Almost all approve authority now.

Many see the new sects as attracting dependent minds which don't know how to think for themselves. "After you become a member," claims one critic, "there is no more thought, only recall."

Emily Hill, herself deprogrammed, feels she was susceptible to recruitment because she wanted to be an active part of the Christian movement but found many Christians weak in their commitments.

Until Christian churches provide a comparable sense of community and purpose, Hill says, they will continue to lose many young people to "the new sects."

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Adapted from November, 1977, Home Missions Magazine.

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Lawyers Must Share  
Blame for U. S. Ills

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SALADO, Tex. (BP)--Lawyers must take a disproportionate share of the blame for the evil in this country because they run the country, a federal district judge told the first Texas Baptist retreat for Christian lawyers.

Judge Woodrow Seals was one of about 10 Christian lawyers to address 70 of their fellow practitioners who left their practice for three days and paid \$50 each to meet at historic Salado near Belton. The meeting was sponsored by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

A Methodist layman from Houston, Judge Seals rapped the attitudes of lawyers revealed in a recent poll. He said the poll showed that only one percent of lawyers regard unequal justice as their most serious problem while 42 percent listed "whether they should advertise" as their most serious problem.

Seals said ethics comes, not from teaching, but from a changed heart. "The reason for law is that man's potential for evil is so great that we must protect him from himself," he said. "When we enhance human personality," he said, "we are enhancing civilization."

Another conference leader, Ralph W. Yarbrough, former United States senator, said it is shocking that "some in the legal profession suggest doing away with probation. In probation there's some hope of reformation."

Kenneth Pepper of Dallas, a teacher of pastoral counseling, and Baptist humorist Grady Nutt admonished the lawyers to be leaders in maintaining strong Christian family life.

"As a couple matures and grows in grace" said Pepper, "the leadership of the family becomes more mutual. Husband and wife must each accept a vital leadership role."

Attorney Orba Lee Malone of El Paso, Tex., spotlighted the "preventive role of the lawyer as a counselor. "It is morally irresponsible to make money off human suffering when we could help prevent it," he said.

Other speakers included Dan McGee, professor at Baylor University, Waco; and Brooks Hays, former Southern Baptist Convention president and former U. S. Congressman from Arkansas. Phil Strickland, an attorney and associate secretary of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, presided.

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**Projections Indicate SBC  
Will Exceed 13 Million**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) church membership will top the 13 million mark during the 1976-77 church year, according to preliminary estimates compiled by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Projected increases also were recorded in mission expenditures, total receipts and church music enrollment.

Decreases are projected this year in baptisms, Sunday School enrollment, church training enrollment, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) enrollment, and Brotherhood enrollment.

Church membership is expected to show a net increase of 142,149 or 1.1 percent. This would bring the projected total number of Southern Baptist church members to 13,064,754.

Mission expenditures and total receipts from churches will continue to show the pattern of substantial increases they have shown for the past few years. This year total receipts will go over \$1.797 billion, a 9.2 percent increase representing gain of \$151,428,305. Mission expenditures are expected to rise 11.1 percent to \$291,497,317.

Ongoing church music enrollment was up .5 percent, or 6,863, to a total of 1,379,461.

Baptisms are expected to drop by 11 percent, or 42,295, from last year's total, to 342,201 during the 1976-77 year.

Sunday School enrollment is projected to decrease by .5 percent this year, a drop of 37,292 to a total enrollment of 7,421,083. Last year Sunday School recorded a gain of 176,843, the largest increase in 17 years and the fifth straight year for an increase.

Projections this year show that church training enrollment is expected to decrease by 4.3 percent, or 79,567, to a total enrollment of 1,770,839. Figures are not available for the number of people involved in New Member Training, Church Leader Training and short-term member training projects.

Brotherhood ongoing enrollment is projected to drop this year by 1.2 percent, or 5,748, to a total of 473,233. Figures are not available for additional persons involved in short-term mission projects.

WMU is expected to experience a 1.7 percent decrease, according to the church reports. The projected loss of 19,364 would bring that total to 1,119,670.

The final official report will be released in February 1978, according to Martin B. Bradley, manager of the Sunday School Board's research services department. The projection figures are based on reports received from more than 26,200 Southern Baptist churches. Approximately 35,000 churches will contribute to the final report.

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**Baptist Among Victims  
Of Malaysia Plane Crash**

Baptist Press

JOHORE Bharu, Malaysia (BP)--The secretary for the Baptist theological seminary, Penang, Malaysia, was among 100 passengers killed in the crash of a hijacked plane here Dec. 4.

She was Mrs. Tung Yu Lin, wife of a Christian minister, who had been secretary to the president of the seminary for more than 16 years, according to Southern Baptist missionary John L. Deal. Her reason for being on the Malaysian flight was not immediately known here. Investigators are trying to determine if hijackers were responsible for the crash.

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