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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 29, 1978

78-194

**Robison Changes Mind  
On College Gift Offer**

By Debbie Stewart

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Evangelist James Robison does not plan to accept a gift of a college campus because related expenses could divert funds from his "vision" to reach the nation for Christ through prime time television.

A spokesman for the James Robison Evangelistic Association said the association "as of this moment" will not acquire the east Texas branch of Ambassador College as a gift from F. William Menge.

Menge, a Virginia businessman and a member of the advisory board of the Robison association, is in the process of purchasing the college from Worldwide Church of God, led by Herbert W. Armstrong in California.

Baptist Press and other news media reported in October that Menge already had purchased the college for the Robison association. The Baptist Press account was based on a news release from the Robison association which said Menge had contracted to purchase the property for \$10.6 million and had given it to Robison.

The association spokesman said that Robison believes that the association would need to invest a considerable amount of money to open and operate the campus. Robison reportedly does not want to detract from his "priority" of developing extensive evangelistic programming on prime time television.

The Associated Press reported in late October that evangelist Lester Roloff hopes to move his South Texas headquarters and several childrens' homes to the Ambassador College location, which he wants to buy from Menge.

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Worldwide Baptist  
Growth ContinuesBaptist Press  
11/29/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--Continued, steady growth of the Southern Baptist Convention and "remarkable" growth in Nigeria and Angola increased the Baptist world population by 1.39 percent in 1977.

The Baptist population of Africa has more than doubled in 10 years to its current 989,971, according to statistics released by the Baptist World Alliance, which has 111 member bodies representing 87 percent of the world's Baptists. The Southern Baptist Convention in the U. S., topping 13 million, is the largest.

Last year mission fields of British and Canadian Baptists had 17 churches in Angola. This year Angola has 474 churches, a "remarkable" growth attributed primarily to a resurgence of vitality in the previously war-ravaged country and to the return of refugees from Zaire.

Zaire is the African nation with the largest number of Baptists--286,968-- followed by Nigeria's 208,637. Baptist membership in Angola, not affiliated with the BWA, exceeds 24,000, some resulting from the work of Southern Baptists.

The United States and North America continue to dominate the numbers among the world's 33.7 million Baptists. All but 236,000 of North America's 29.2 million Baptists live in the United States.

The number of Asian Baptist churches increased 317 to 11,529. Total membership is 1,445,511, up 24,402 from last year. India contains more than half Asia's Baptist churches and over half the membership.

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Similarly, Brazil dominates South American statistics which have nearly doubled in the past decade. Brazil contains 450,273 of South America's 551,439 Baptists.

The USSR has the largest Baptist population in Europe, with 530,000, followed by the United Kingdom, with 258,326 and Romania, 164,000.

The 10 largest Baptist populations are: United States, 28,955,259; India, 832,944; USSR, 540,000; Brazil, 450,723; Burma, 350,771; Zaire 286,968; United Kingdom, 258,326; Nigeria, 208,637; Canada, 193,207; and Romania 164,000.

The BWA said an additional 13.3 million people are part of the Baptist community, which includes children and others under pastoral care. It roughly compares to the "inclusive membership" figures of other denominations.

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Vidalia Church Holds Service  
For Former Baptist Newsman

Baptist Press  
11/29/78

VIDALIA, Ga. (BP)--Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church, Vidalia, for a victim of the Jonestown, Guyana, massacre known to the world as NBC news correspondent Don Harris, but known to this small Georgia town as Darwin Humphrey.

Harris, 42, grew up at First Baptist Church where his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Humphrey, are still members, but he had no church affiliation at his death.

His body was cremated and the ashes were taken back to Los Angeles by his wife Shirley and their three teen-aged children.

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Rhodesian Missionaries  
Move Into Urban Area

Baptist Press  
11/29/78

BULAWAYO, Rhodesia (BP)--Mr. and Mrs. F. Eugene Milby, Southern Baptist missionaries to Rhodesia, have moved from Plumtree to Bulawayo after guerrilla activity in the Plumtree area sharply curtailed their ministries there.

Shortly after the Milbys returned from furlough, guerrillas killed a leading Methodist layman in their first action against churches in the rural border town. Guerrilla threats closed the Dingumuz Primary School, where the Milbys taught scripture classes, the same week.

In Bulawayo, Milby will work at the Baptist Publishing House. Mrs. Milby will edit junior Sunday School materials, help revise the Sunday School manual, and complete some Ndebele language projects. They are still responsible for work in Plumtree and hope to return when conditions stabilize.

The Milbys are both natives of Kentucky, where Milby was pastor of several churches before their missionary appointment.

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Supreme Court Will Examine  
N.Y. Obscenity Conviction

Baptist Press  
11/29/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--An adult bookstore owner from New York convinced the U.S. Supreme Court to review his obscenity conviction.

Alex Mandakis, of Wawayanda, N.Y., was convicted last year and fined \$3,000 after a local judge, officials from the district attorney's office, and police officers seized hundreds of allegedly obscene magazines and films from his store.

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Mandakis contends that the search and seizure was done without a warrant specifically naming the materials to be seized. He also maintains that the judge's determination that the materials were obscene was made after considering only a small portion of the confiscated material, contrary to a Supreme Court ruling five years ago that said a film, book, or magazine must be considered as a whole.

Orange County District Attorney David S. Ritter argued in a written statement to the high court that the judge viewed "as much of the films and magazines as he deemed necessary" to decide that they were probably obscene. He also pointed out that the judge did not order confiscated all the magazines he inspected at the store.

While the case poses some interesting questions for the high court relating to proper procedures in obtaining obscenity convictions, the justices are not expected to break significant new legal ground in their forthcoming decision. The court has been deluged in recent years with obscenity appeals caused in part by its nebulous "community standards" rule which allows each local jurisdiction to establish its own obscenity guidelines.

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Chicago Pastor's Sister  
Among Jonestown Victims

By Robert Hastings

Baptist Press  
11/29/78

CHICAGO (BP)--The sister of a Southern Baptist pastor was one of the more than 900 persons who were either murdered or committed suicide at the People's Temple commune in Jonestown, Guyana.

She is Beatrice Dawkins, 60, sister of Robert Johnson, pastor of the Community Church of Today, a black Baptist congregation in Chicago.

Johnson said his sister joined the cult headed by Jim Jones about eight years ago and was one of his most devoted followers. "When I first heard the news on television of the mass deaths, I knew Beatrice was one of them because she was really committed to the People's Temple," Johnson said. Her name appeared on one of the first published lists of casualties.

Jones tried to get Johnson to follow his sister and join the People's Temple, Johnson said, but he refused, even though Jones spoke with "the authority of a Martin Luther King" and his followers seemed to have a special "power of persuasion."

Johnson, who had several conferences with Jones, said if the reports are true of sexual perversions and mental control that took place in Jonestown, they are the acts of a different man than the one he talked with.

"He was humble, real humble," Johnson said. "He would help anyone who wanted to be a part of his movement."

Johnson, who at 35 is 25 years younger than his sister, said he talked by telephone with her many times as she traveled, recruiting for People's Temple. "She said she would do anything for Jim Jones," Johnson said.

Miss Dawkins was a Christian, Johnson is convinced, but he knew nothing of any denominational affiliation she might have had. Because of the difference in age, they never lived in the same house while growing up.

Jones is listed in the Disciples of Christ 1978 year book as an "officially ordained minister" of that denomination. California regional officials of the Disciples of Christ began investigating Jones' movement last year, but no action was taken, according to Evangelical Press.

A report in Newsweek magazine said Jones called members of the People's Temple to a final communion service. "Everyone has to die," he said. "If you love me as much as I love you, we must all die or be destroyed from the outside."

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Jones then ordered his medical team to bring out a battered tub, filled with strawberry flavored water and laced with tranquilizers and cyanide. "Bring the babies first," he commanded.

After they had drunk their potions, members were led away by armed guards and told to lie down in rows, face down. Family groups often held hands or embraced. Within minutes, they began to gasp, writhe and retch.

Johnson said a local television station planned to film his sister's funeral service.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dr. John P. Newport, Chavanne professor of religious studies at Rice University, Houston, Texas, examined theological aspects of Jim Jones and the People's Temple movement which led to the Twentieth Century's largest mass murder-suicide. Dr. Newport, author of books on demonism and cults--"Demons, Demons, Demons" and "Christ and the New Consciousness"--will return in January to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, where he spent 20 years as professor of the philosophy of religion before joining Rice in 1976. He will become the seminary's vice president for academic affairs and provost and professor of philosophy of religion.

Jonestown: A Window  
Into The Demonic

By John P. Newport

Baptist Press  
11/29/78

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--The history of the People's Temple movement, which culminated in the largest mass murder-suicide in the Twentieth Century, shows the classic pattern of the demonic.

From a biblical perspective it is evident that the "The Rev." Jim Jones and some of his leaders had Satanic characteristics and exhibited manifestations of anti-Christ figures.

Earmarks of the demonic, revealed in the macabre events at Jonestown, Guyana, which destroyed the lives of more than 900 persons, include preoccupation with pain and death, distortion and perversion of sex and family life, mind control, use of religion as a vehicle of power with the leader claiming to be God incarnate, such counterfeit gifts of the spirit as healing and use of spiritual phenomena, mind control techniques and deprivation of freedom, and progression from something seemingly good to moral degeneracy.

Christians, shocked by this unbelievable tragedy, grapple with how to react to it in light of Jones' claim that his movement was "Christian." That's the problem faced by many, especially the young, in an era in which many cults inveigle persons to convert to their cause.

Christians may gain insights from sociologists and psychologists who have examined the horror of Jonestown. But, for the Christian, these explanations do not take the place of or exclude a theological explanation based on the central teachings of the Bible.

The Bible's central affirmation is the reality of God as a personal Father of love, righteousness and power. God limited himself in giving freedom, both to personal angelic beings and humans. Satan, as a created spiritual being, rebelled against God. Biblical teaching states that he pursued a pattern of defiance and rebellion against God and his purposes. Other fallen angels followed Satan in his revolt against God.

Satan's plan is to disorganize and disrupt the true knowledge, worship, and purposes of God. Satan further seeks to organize his own kingdom and control men and obtain their worship. The Apostle Paul warns us that Satan often disguises his followers as "angels of light" or "servants of righteousness."

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, Satan worked through political and religious groups. In recent history, Satan apparently has reincarnated himself in such men and movements as Hitler and the Nazi party, Charles Manson and the Manson Family and Jones and the People's Temple.

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The biblical perspective definitely points to Satanic characteristics in Jones and some of his followers.

First, Jones sought to pervert and distort the religious instincts of humble people. Approximately 70 percent of his followers were underprivileged people from urban ghettos. He took advantage of their religious background to pose as a Christian prophet. He faked miraculous faith healings. He used prior investigation to supplement his apparent psychic divination powers which he used to amaze people with details of their lives.

Many of his middle class followers were counter-culture idealists who originally were caught up in the movements protesting against the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons and other problems in American society. Jones used their interest in racial, economic and social justice as a wedge to gain their adherence. He talked of a Christian socialist democracy and a classless and integrated society.

But soon his so-called power of love was twisted into the love of power. After using religious and idealistic interests to gain followers, Jones began to seek control of their lives. He demanded all their possessions on the threat of death. He led many into adulterous and homosexual relationships. Then they were forced to sign statements admitting their acts along with admissions of stealing and other wrong doings. They were forced to sign pledges to kill defectors and commit suicide at Jones' command.

Jones' professed devotion to socialist justice turned into fascist tyranny. He manipulated and used his followers to gain power in high political arenas, including the communistic leaders in Guyana.

He used classical techniques of mind control. In Guyana, he used sleep and food deprivation, constant propaganda and the breaking down of the family structure. Armed guards patrolled the grounds. People's Temple members had no way to communicate with the outside world. Defectors were harrassed and threatened. Dark circles under the eyes and loss of weight were signs of loyalty. Deprived of passports and money, living in a dangerous jungle area, his followers were completely at his mercy. He conducted mock mass suicide rituals regularly and brainwashed children with electrode machines, called "Blue Monsters."

Seeking his clue from the famous cult leader, Father Divine, Jones began to claim that he was God incarnate or the incarnation of Christ, Buddha and Lenin. He saw himself in a messianic role. This led him to the belief that he could transcend all biblical ideas of right or wrong.

He was to be called "Father" or "Dad." Confessions were to be made to him. He was reported to have had sexual relations with dozens of women in the group and many men. His professed end justified any means.

These practices are clearly in line with the Biblical description of anti-Christ figures. In fact, in his latter days, Jones openly stated that he did not believe in a God outside of himself. He said, "I am God. There is no other God and religion is the opiate of the people." His followers wore amulets or charms, which contained his picture. He demanded absolute loyalty in worship.

Jones developed other techniques of anti-Christ figures. He alone knew the truths on all subjects. Defectors were to be sought out and killed. He felt the end of the world was near, enemies were closing in, and spies were everywhere ready to persecute and kill him and his followers.

"Now that I have killed Congressman Ryan, I will be killed," he said. "If I am lost your life will be meaningless. Our cause is right. Mass suicide in the service of me and my cause will further the cause in my memory. It's beautiful to die for me and my cause."

The Guyana events indicate the power of Satan is awesome and seemingly irresistible from a human perspective. We live in a time in which we must face how to deal with the power of the occult. The Christian has the resources.

Confronted with cults, Christians may test or "try the spirits" by examining their attitude toward Christ (I John 4:1-6), the fruits of their efforts, and their moral and spiritual teachings and practices. In the beginning, moral practices, as was the case with Jones' group, may be hard to test since the pattern indicates gradual degeneration from good to evil.

The biblical teachings state that a person cannot resist Satan in his or her own natural strength and human wisdom. The biblical drama further tells of God's love plan which sent his son Jesus Christ to identify with man's predicament. It is the good news of Christianity, that in the life, death, resurrection and ascended power of Jesus Christ, we have resources available to resist Satan and provide for the fulfilling and victorious life in the here and now and in the eternal life hereafter.

One prominent psychiatrist points out that mental illness relates primarily to disorders of the mind. Satan works primarily on bondage of the will. The message of Christianity is that Christ can deliver us from bondage and give us purpose and meaning.

For the Christian, the underlying theological meaning of the Guyana events unfolds in the Biblical teaching. Because of Satan's tempting power and man's rebellion, similar events will undoubtedly continue as history moves towards its climax, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

But Christians do not set dates for the end. Christians rather seek to learn from such tragedies. They seek to test or try the spirits. They renew efforts to incarnate Christianity in terms of personal and social application. They redouble efforts in Christian teaching and evangelism. Theological seminaries intensify their efforts to more adequately train authentic Christian leaders and ministers.

Christians also realize anew that America's hard-won and deeply treasured religious freedom requires constant vigilance. Even now less dramatic and extreme groups are using the media, subliminal techniques and ritual incantations to impair or harm children and young people.

New Testament churches must redouble efforts to engender authentic freedom and a discriminating perspective under the lordship of Christ as a model for the community, the nation and the world.

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The Baptist Press mailing of Thursday, Nov. 30, will carry a story by Glenn Igleheart, director of the department of interfaith witness at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, suggesting reactions to cults in light of the Jonestown horror.



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