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# LUTHERAN WITNESS

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## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

# Beware the Cults!

*People don't join cults; cults recruit people. And cults are growing as fast as ever. Any one of us can be vulnerable at one time or another.*

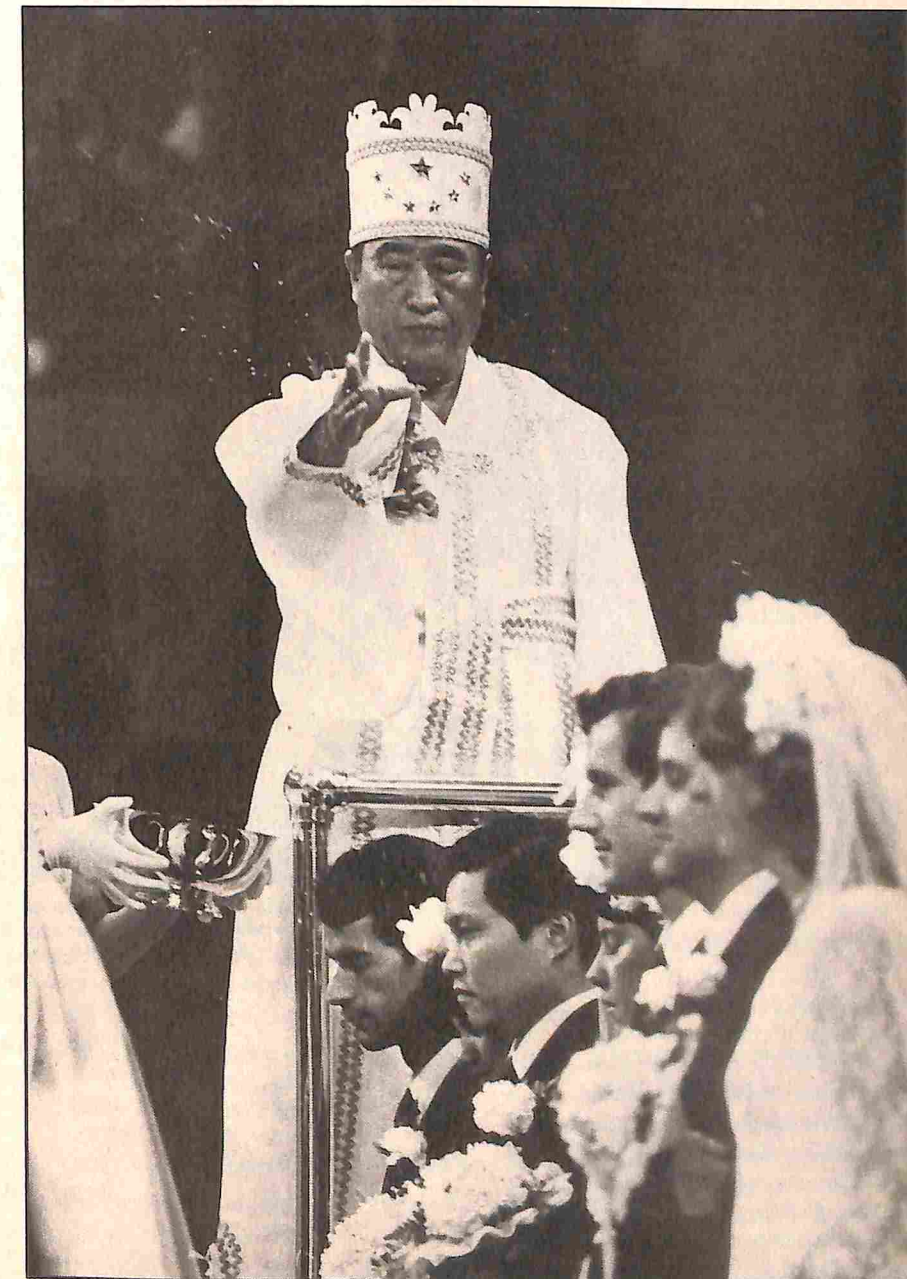
by Eldon Winker

Time magazine's May 6 cover story, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power," reported that former members of the cult had been mentally and physically abused by the intimidating tactics of Scientology. In addition, they had been bilked of vast sums of cash and property by this "ruthless global scam."

Together with a friend, 14-year-old Robin George visited a Hare Krishna temple. After repeated visits, she became a member. Krishna leaders convinced her that her parents were demons. They told her it was okay to deceive them and other nonbelievers. And they persuaded her to run away from home to a Krishna hiding place. It took her parents more than a year to find her. Robin finally fled the cult, but not before a Krishna lawyer had instructed her to lie about the circumstances of her indoctrination.

Elderly Catherine had just buried her husband. At the urging of a "friendly" neighbor, she joined a religious group with the hope of learning how to prepare her own soul for death. The neighbor moved in with Catherine in order to "care for her." She immediately began exerting control over Catherine by forcing a starch-heavy diet on her and depriving her of sleep. She warned Catherine that harm would come to her and her family if she dared to leave the group.

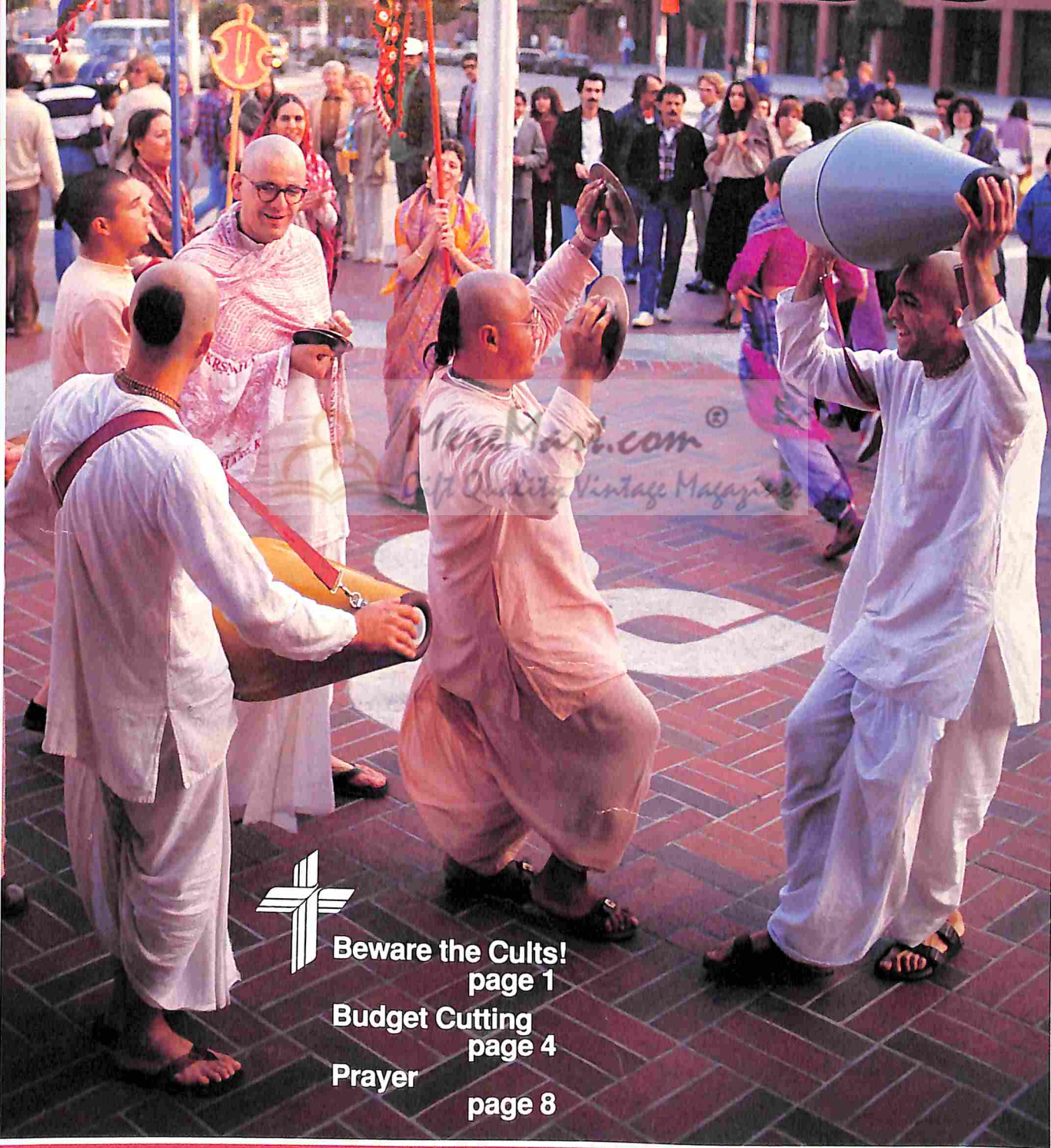
Susan, Catherine's daughter, noticed that her mother had lost weight and become withdrawn. Catherine had liquidated all of her assets and taken thousands of dollars out of savings. The day before her planned move to the group's headquarters in a neighboring state, she suffered a nervous breakdown. Susan rushed her to the hospital.



In 1982, 2,100 "Moonie" couples (members of Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church) were married in a mass wedding in New York's Madison Square Garden. Moon himself (shown here sprinkling "holy water" on some of the brides and grooms) personally decided the matchup of each couple.

Photo by Diego Goldberg, Sygma

# WITNESS



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