

SYLVIA'S CORNER

HEAVENS GATE AND MORMONISM

A COMPARISON

Calls came in fast and furiously to the secular radio station. The show's topic was the Heaven's Gate cult and the 39 suicides in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

The host asked the audience for reasons why these people did what they did, and then for a definition of a cult. I was really surprised when a Mormon called and entered the discussion. He said that a cultist was a person who didn't think for himself and who followed someone other than Christ. As I listened to him talk, I wondered how this caller could reason this way about a UFO cult and not realize that Mormonism was a cult as well.

Joseph Smith and his successors are just as much modern day prophets as the leaders of the Heaven's Gate group. The leaders in both cases claimed to be God's mouthpiece. To get God's viewpoint on this, please check out Jeremiah 23, Deuteronomy 13:1-10 and 18 :20-22. Jesus warned about false prophets in Matthew 24:24.

Let's take a look at some other things that make up a cult. The Heavens Gate followers talked about shedding their containers, (bodies) and about moving to the next level. This is not very different from the Mormon concept of "Eternal progression," when you think about it, Mormons just call it Celestial, Telestial, or Terrestrial. They believe that they will have spirit children and populate other worlds. The two groups are both attempting to obtain godhood.

How different is the Bible in this regard. In the Book of Isaiah you will see that God claims over and over again that there is only one of Him. In Genesis 3:1-13, Satan commands Eve to eat the fruit in order to be like God. The same lie is being propagated today by the cults. According to the April 7, 1997 edition of Times magazine, Do, or Bo as he was formerly called, believed that in a previous life he was Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. He also told his followers that Jesus was appointed from the "higher kingdom" which he said was the level above humans. He said that he (Jesus) was appointed to come down and preach about the kingdom of God to earthlings. Doesn't that parallel the Mormon belief in a preexistence? Both beliefs relegate our Savior into being just another teacher. They don't look at Him as God. This can also be seen in the way Mormons look at Jesus as their elder brother, thus changing Him to fit their image. Please look up Romans-25.

Both the Heavens Gate cult and the cult of Mormonism felt that they had to do works in order to win God's favor. In the suicide group, some even went so far as to be castrated. How different is this from the way Mormons try to work their way to Heaven

by obeying a series of laws and ordinances? According to Good Morning America, an ex member of Heavens Gate said that two or three followers would group together to help one of them conquer a sin like anger. Mormons also practice works because they believe that they are saved by grace after all they can do. See Galatians 3:10 to see what the Bible says.

Do, the Heavens Gate leader, knew scripture. He used portions of it mixed with UFO doctrines. He was also involved in the occult, so he twisted God's word and added to it. Mormons do the same thing. They claim that the Bible is only good "in so far as it is translated correctly. This means translated their way. In addition they also have more information than was originally given. They have the Book of Mormon, Doctrine of Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. Cults always add to scripture to substantiate their doctrine.

The suicide victims isolate themselves from friends and family. One member's mother was told that she could see her daughter only if she was happy about what she was doing. Mormons stay very connected as well, by all their church jobs and activities. Heavens Gate recruited new members. Don't Mormons do the same? That's why there are so many active missionaries.

In cults, leaders always test the faith of their members. In Heavens Gate the members were willing to follow their leaders to their death. When I was a Mormon, I always had to go to interviews with either the stake president or Bishop to determine my worthiness. If one desires to leave either organization or any cult for that matter, they fear the disappointment of the leadership that exercises control over them. This same fear intimidates people into staying, in many cases.

Are there similarities between Heavens Gate and Mormonism? You bet! They're really not much different at all!