



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

SECTS & CULTS



By: Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwardes

Footprints into Africa

# **STUDIES IN SECTS AND CULTS**

## **THE MARKS OF A CULT**

### **(HOW TO IDENTIFY A CULT)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. EXTRA BIBLICAL REVELATION
2. A FALSE BASIS OF SALVATION
3. UNCERTAIN HOPE
4. PRESUMPTIOUS MESSIANIC LEADERSHIP
5. DOCTRINAL AMBIGUITY
6. THE CLAIM OF SPECIAL DISCOVERIES
7. DEFECTIVE CHRISTOLOGY
8. SEGMENTED BIBLICAL ATTENTION
9. ENSLAVING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
10. FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION
11. DENUMICATION OF OTHERS
12. SYNCRETISM

#### **CONCLUSION**

## STUDIES IN SECTS AND CULTS

### THE MARKS OF A CULT

#### Introduction

All over the world, there is a spreading of false teaching. Not only is there an increase in false religions, but also in the cults.

Cults = False teachings

All of the major cults today have 10 common characteristics:

#### 1. Extra Biblical Revelation

For us, the Bible alone is our supreme authority. All that God wants to say to us is in the Bible. There is NOTHING EXTRA (Sola Scriptura – only Scripture).

But the cults add to the Bible.

eg. The Mormons have a book called , “The Book of Mormon”, which they say is equal to the Bible.

The Jehovah Witnesses have their own translation of the Bible – “The New World Translation”, which denies the deity of Jesus Christ. A cult always adds to the Bible.

#### 2. False basis of Salvation

The Bible teaches us that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Cults disagree – they teach that we must do certain things to become believers. (Jesus +).

#### 3. Uncertain Hope (Future)

We believe that through Christ we have a home in heaven. It is sure and certain, but the cults do not offer that certainty eg. The Jehovah Witnesses teach that the only people getting into heaven are the 144 000.

Read - *30 years Watch Tower Slave*.

#### 4. Presumptuous Messianic Leadership

The cults exalt their leaders to the place of Jesus. The Bible teaches servant leadership, but the cults exalt their leadership.

#### 5. Doctrinal Ambiguity

Because their teaching is not based on the Word of God. You will find that there is an enormous amount of doctrinal confusion.

6. Claim to Special Discoveries

- a) They claim that they've seen God and
- b) They claim that God spoke to them.

eg. The Mormons – their leader Joseph Smith claimed that the angel called Merion told him to go to a cave and that he would find tablets there.

Cults claim visions and dreams instead of the Bible.

7. Defective Christology

We believe that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. However, the cults will always go wrong on Jesus.

The vast majority of them deny the deity of Christ – they teach that Jesus is not God.

8. Segmented Biblical Attention

The cults will major on certain parts of the Bible, but not the whole Bible.

9. Enslaving Organizational Structures

When you become a member of the cult, it becomes more important than your family, and the demands of all your time. They plan lots of meetings and conferences that one must attend. They enslave your time.

10. Financial Exploitation

The cults take your money, which is then given either to the leaders, who sometimes enjoy luxurious living, or to their organization.

Conclusion

We live in a time of false teaching, and we need to be careful. These 10 characteristics will help you identify a cult.

## **SECTS AND CULTS**

### **THE JEHOVAH WITNESSES**

#### **1. HISTORY**

Their history is closely tied up with their first three presidents.

##### **A. CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL**

He was born in the little town of Allegheny, which is now part of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania U.S.A. He was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1842, his parents were from the Presbyterian Church and were of Scottish decent. From 15 years of age he worked with his father in his clothing business. When he was 18 he joined the Congregational church, he became a skeptic and began to doubt the Bible, which hurt his parents because they had brought him up under the Bible. Another turning point (at the age of 18) was when he went into a church and the minister preached on the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. Charles Russell then wrote his first book called "The object and the manner of Christ's return". He said that Christ would come in the year 1874, but he did not.... But he then said He would come in 1914 only spiritually (not in the flesh) He continued to teach his students in his Bible class. In 1874 the Jehovah Witnesses began, and in 1879 the Watchtower Magazine. In 1880 there were already 30 congregations. By 1967 there were half a million across America, with the Watchtower being produced in 62 languages. But his personal life was a mess, to collect money he sold "Miracle Wheat" It would grow 5 times quicker than any other wheat. He had a disastrous marriage, in 1913 his wife sued for a divorce, he then died in 1916, but the movement was on its way.

##### **B. JOSEPH FRANKLIN RUTHERFORD.**

He was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1869 in the village of Booneville in the Missouri province, U.S.A. His parents were Baptists and brought him up on the Bible. But at 16 years of age he went to study law at college, he graduated as a lawyer at 22 years of age and became known as Judge Rutherford. In 1894 he met his first Jehovah's Witness and became one. In 1907 he was appointed as their legal adviser, in 1917 he became the second leader. Immediately he established their headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. In 1918 he was arrested, imprisoned, for refusing to do military service. He was sentenced for 20 years. He was, however, released and continued to teach that all governments were of the devil, and so must never be submitted to. He died in 1942. Charles Taze Russell emphasized Bible study. Judge Rutherford emphasized literature and house-to-house visitation.

##### **C. NATHAN HORNER KNORR.**

He was born in 1905 in Bethlehem, U.S.A.. At the age of 16 (1921) he joined the Jehovah's Witnesses. Two years later, he was one of their preachers. In 1940 he was made the Vice-President, his emphasis was on training, and he established theocratic schools to train Jehovah Witness' and immediately the work grew even more. By 1995, in Mexico there were 3000 congregations with 90,000 members. In England there were 1500 congregations with 90,000

members. In South Africa 550 congregations with 50,000 members. They produced 28 million Jehovah Witness Bibles. 12 million booklets, 293 million Watchtowers., 155 million visits were made and 382 million hours were spent witnessing.

2. **TEACHING**

A. **TRINITY**

The Jehovah's Witnesses rejects the Trinity, they teach that Satan is the organizer of the Trinity (**Gen.1:26, Isa.6:8, Mt.28:19, Jn. 1:1, 2 Cor.13:14, 1 Jn.5:7-8**)

B. **JESUS CHRIST**

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach us that Jesus was only a man, but He was not God, they deny His deity. (**Is. 7:14, 9:6, Jn.1:1, 14, Php. 2:6-8, Col. 1:15-19**)

C. **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

They deny that the Holy Spirit is a person, furthermore he is not the third person of the Trinity. (**Jn. 14:16-18, 15:26-27, 16:7-14**)

D. **DOCTRINE OF MAN**

They teach that mankind does not have a soul and therefore they deny the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. (**Gen.1:26, Job 32:8, 1Cor.11:7**)

E. **ATONEMENT**

They also deny that Christ's death on the cross was not a substitution and it was not propitiation. (**Col. 1:20, 1Peter 2:24**)

F. **RESURRECTION**

They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and therefore our resurrection. (**Mk.16:14, Luke. 24:39, 1 Cor.15:15-44**)

G. **DOCTRINE OF SIN AND JUDGEMENT.**

There is no hell. (**Luke. 13:24-28, Peter 2:17**)

H. **SALVATION**

They deny salvation by grace, they rather teach that we are saved by our good works. (**Eph. 2:8-9, Romans 5:1**)

I. **CHURCH**

They believe that both the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have their origin with Satan. (**Rev. 5:9-10, 7:9**)

J. **EARTHLY GOVERNMENT**

They again teach that earthly government is of the devil (**Romans 13:1-7**)

## **SUMMARY**

What is clear from the above is how evil their teachings are, they are to be totally rejected

### **3. CHALLENGE OF THE CULTS**

But we can learn from them.

1. The importance of having strong convictions
2. The importance of knowing the Bible
3. Zeal for witnessing
4. They use literature - (Christians need to learn how to use tracts!)
5. The strong sense of urgency
6. The role of the lay person - they use everyone
7. The strong sense of dedication - they give their all
8. They use good witnessing techniques.
9. They are not afraid to be ridiculed for what they believe.
10. Their contribution to good health

### **4. WHEN THEY COME TO YOUR DOOR.**

#### **A. WHAT NOT TO DO**

- i) Do not argue about religion
- ii) Do not engage in a conversation about present events.
- iii) Do not accept or buy any literature.

#### **B. WHAT TO DO**

- i) Always be courteous and gracious.
- ii) Listen without interrupting
- iii) Tell them your testimony  
Tell them how you were saved by the grace of God.  
(Ask them how they came to salvation – ask for their testimony ...  
they do not have one.)

## SECTS AND CULTS

### MORMONISM

#### 1. EARLY HISTORY

On the 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1823, Joseph Smith had a visit from an angel called Moroni. This Angel revealed to him that in 420 A.D. some golden plates with the history of a group of people called the Nephites were buried near New York. Joseph Smith went to the spot and there were the plates along with a pair spectacles which he later called “Urim and Thummin” With the aid of those spectacles he was able to decipher and translate into English the inscriptions on these golden plates which he claimed were written in “Reformed Egyptian. This book he entitles the “Book of Mormons”.

On the basis of these so called revelations from God, in 1830 the Mormon Church was founded. Following the death of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young took over the control of the movement. He was the one who lead the group to Salt Lake in Utah, where they founded their capital Salt Lake City. Young, like many of the Mormons was a polygamist with 25 wives and 56 children.

Keep in mind that there are several Mormon groups and that each group claiming to be the only trustworthy and true church, rejects all the others as apostates. There have been as many as 100 offshoots of the original church.

#### 2. ERRORS

##### A. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD:

God is a material creature who was once a man as we are now men. They say that man can finally achieve godhead and that there are many gods.

**FOR ANSWER: Deut 6:4, Hos.11:9, Matt.22:24-30, Mark 12:24, John 4:24, Psalm 145:13, Tim.1:17.**

##### B. THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus was a created being who was married to three wives. He became ‘God’ through hard work, just as we can.

**FOR ANSWER: Matt.1:18, Luke 1:35, John 3:13, Romans 9:5**

##### C. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

The Holy Spirit is a fluid or a substance, not a person and certainly not God.

**FOR ANSWER: John 4:24, 14:17, 16:13-15, Acts 13:2.**

##### D. DOCTRINE OF SIN:

Man is progressively becoming a god. Adam’s sin was necessary in order to provide parentage for the spirit children of god who were ready and waiting for earth.

**FOR ANSWER: Gen.2:7, Rom. 5:12, 6:23, 8:7, Eph. 2:1-3, Gal.3: 13.**

##### E. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION:

Salvation comes by works and all men will spend eternity on some level of a multistoried heaven. The level will be determined by the scope of each man's good works.

**FOR ANSWER** Acts.13:39, Rom.4:25, 5:1, Eph.2:8-9, 1 Jn. 3:1-2.

**F. THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE:**

They have 'new Scripture' and writings of Joseph Smith are divinely inspired revelations, God's 19<sup>th</sup> Century additions to the Bible

**FOR ANSWER:** Deu.4:2, 12:32, Heb. 1:1-2, Jude 3, Gal. 1:8

**REMEMBER !!!!** Watch the Mormons carefully, for they travel two by two. What one cannot think of the other can. So don't tackle them singlehanded unless you are sure of your ground. Listen to their language carefully, it appears to be evangelical .... Be sure you get them to define what they mean, it makes a difference! Avoid red herrings! ... stay with the main points. Do not argue, you are seeking to win a soul, not an argument.

## SECTS AND CULTS FREEMASONRY

### INTRODUCTION

The people see this movement as Christian. In fact many ministers belong to it. The Freemasonry movement is the largest secret society in the world, there could be over 8 million freemasons. Over the years, seventeen Presidents of the United States have been masons, including many other leading politicians around the world.

#### 1. ITS ANTIQUITIES.

It claims also to be the oldest religion system in the world, the first Lodge took place in London in 1717 and it was called the Grand Lodge, it was a trade union of Stone Masons and they used to live in lodges on the construction sites. Eventually religious symbolism was introduced and together they had 33 degrees, there were 3 sections to these degrees:

A. THE BLUE LODGE (1-3)

Here you are introduced to secrets of the movement especially their handshake and passwords

B. THE YORK RITE.

This is only for those who professed to be Christians

D. THE SCOTISH RITE (4:32)

In this, you could be a Jew, Christian, or a Mohammedan.

#### 2. ITS ATTRACTIONS

It has three attractions:

A. FELLOWSHIP

It offers fellowship for men

B. COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES

Masons will never be in need.

C. RELIGIOUS ADVANCEMENT

It claims to be religious. It is not Biblical.

#### 3. ITS ABSURDITIES

The biggest problem we have is with their initiation. When a candidate is initiated, all his clothing is removed, except for 1 or 2 pieces of clothing given to him, all his metal objects are removed. Your left trouser must be folded above the knee, right foot must have a slipper without a heel, left breast is bare, right sleeve rolled up above the elbow, a rope around the neck and eyes covered with a cloth. He then repeats an oath after which that covering of eyes is removed and he is introduced into the light of the freemasonry movement.

#### 4. ITS ABOMINATIONS

A. OATHS

B. SECRECY - signs, meetings

C. IMPLICATIONS.

Hide truth from people

#### 5. ITS ANTI-CHRISTIANITY

A. SYNCRETIST

All roads lead to heaven, God is called the great Architect.

B. NOT GOD OF THE BIBLE

C. JESUS IS NOT GLORIFIED

In this movement, he is placed on a par with all the other religions.

#### 6. OUR ATTITUDE (Eph 5:11, 1 Cor. 8:9-13, 2 Thes. 3: 6, Cor. 6:14-18)

We certainly would encourage all true believers to come out of this movement.

## **SECTS AND CULTS**

### **THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The New Age movement is a very large network of people who share common values and a common vision. Their values are based on:

##### **A. EASTERN PHILOSOPHIES/ OCCULT MYSTICISM**

##### **B. PANTHEISTIC/ MONISM**

Their teachings are taken from:

- i) Biblical terminology
- ii) Eastern Philosophy
- iii) Mind over techniques
- iv) Mystical experiences

So it is a bringing together of those four things, which centre a person on themselves in order to find the God who is within them.

#### **2. WHAT DOES IT TEACH?**

“It is a converging of Biblical terminology, eastern philosophies, mind power techniques, and various mystical experiences which centre a person within themselves to find spiritual truth and purpose for life.

##### **A. THERE IS A NEW WORLD COMING.**

The new age movement offers an optimistic view of life and is called “The Age of Aquarius”, this will be a wonderful new age of peace, of harmony, and of prosperity. It is far broader than just reform and it is deeper than revolution. There is a brand new age coming. The question is how? Answer through the transformation of our consciousness.

##### **B. ALL IS ONE AND GOD IS ALL**

This is pure pantheism, this teaches that God is in everything.

##### **C. RE-INCARNATION AND KARMA**

In common with Hindus each person must determine their own Karma (what you sow is what you reap) depending on how you lived this life, will depend how you came back.

##### **D. OUR CONSCIOUSNESS MUST BE TRANSFORMED.**

In order to realize our full potential you must experience a transformed consciousness, sometimes by meditation or yoga or through psychedelic drugs or through the Occult.

##### **E. ALL RELIGIONS ARE THE SAME**

All roads lead to heaven, this is called syncretism.

##### **F. THE UNSEEN WORLD CAN HELP**

They place great emphasis on the Occult, you can talk to the dead, and they have people who they call chandlers, medium, fortunetellers, all taking to the dead.

#### **3. ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

##### **A. THEIR MAGAZINE CALLED ODYSSEY**

This is their chief publication and contains a number of articles on subjects like vegetarianism, eastern religions and philosophies as well as articles by some well known personalities.

##### **B. HEALTH SEMINARS**

The New Age Movement is behind so many of the health seminars

C. GAMES, TOYS

A few years ago the most popular toys were called Dungeons and Dragons.

D. TV, FILMS, MUSIC, MEDICINE

More and more films and TV programs promote the New Age Movement

E.g. Chariots of the gods, Raiders of the lost ark. A lot of musicians continue to promote it E.g. John Denver.

E. NEW AGE PARAPHERNALIA.

Crystal balls, incense, tarot cards, fortune tellers, astrology charts, herbal medicines, yoga, transcendental meditation, the power of positive thinking.

4. BIBLE ANSWERS

A. THE BIBLE VIEW OF THE NEW AGE.

The Bible clearly teaches that this world is coming to an end and then there will be eternity spent either in heaven or in hell. (Rev.11:15)

B. WE ARE NOT GOD (Is.57:15)

God is separate from His creation.

C. WE BELIEVE IN RESURRECTION AND JUDGEMENT (Heb.9:27-28)

D. OUR INNER NATURE NEEDS TO BE CHANGED (Jn.3:3)

We need to be born again.

E. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD. (Jn.14:6, Acts 4:12)

F. CONTACT WITH "SPIRIT GUIDES" IS DEAD-END ALLEY IT IS WRONG.

The Bible condemns us from having any contact with the spirit world. (Deut. 18:9-13, Is. 8:19-20)

5. CONCLUSION

The New Age Movement is a dangerous philosophy and yet it is so popular today. It emphasizes that we attain Godhead through good works, they teach strongly evolution and the teaching of reincarnation and they are waiting to usher in a one world government, with a one world religion and a one world money system. Christianity stands against this teaching, we are sinners that need to be redeemed and we can come to God only through Jesus Christ. We live in a fallen world and we are waiting for glory.

## SECTS AND CULTS SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISM

### 1. ITS FOUNDERS

#### A. WILLIAM MILLER

Miller was an American farmer who was converted from Deism in the year 1816. In 1841, he commenced a concentrated study of prophecy using only his Bible and Cruden's Concordance. After two years of intensive study and at the age of 50, he published his findings. In his studies, Millar made two great mistakes. Firstly he refused to be assisted by the writings of any human writer and secondly, with relatively limited knowledge he chose a very difficult subject. A major error in his studies was made during a study of **Daniel 8:14** when he hit upon the idea that the 2300 sacrifices were 2300 years. On the basis of this, he calculated that Christ would return to earth on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1844 (Originally he forecast 1843. But when Christ did not appear he changed this to 1844. When he still did not appear Millar abandoned his idea, he died on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1849 at the age of 68. After Millers death, Hiram Edson a Millerite claimed to have seen a vision on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1844 in which he saw Christ standing at the altar in heaven. From this he concluded that Miller had been right as to the TIME Mentioned by Daniel, but wrong about the PLACE.

#### B. ELLEN G. WHITE

Together with her husband James White, this young lady took up Miller's cast of ideas and began to build a new system upon them. She was subject to hysterical trances but claimed inspiration for her visions, trances, books, and literatures, she was destined to become the prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventist Movement. She died in 1915

### 2. IT'S ERRORS.

#### A. THE ATONEMENT

The work of Christ on the cross was not final. Christ did not make atonement when he shed his blood on the cross. Our sins still remain on the record books which Christ has been examining since 1844.

FOR ANSWER: Heb.1:3, 9:11, 12, 10:12-14, 9:26.

#### B. THE SCAPE-GOAT.

Based on **Lev.16:8**. When Christ has completed his INVESTIGATIVE JUDGEMENT, he will take the pardoned sins and place them on Satan.

FOR ANSWER: 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24, 3:18, John 10:11.

#### C. SOUL-SLEEP.

"The state to which we are reduced by death is one of silence and entire unconsciousness. Between death and resurrection the dead sleep." There is no hell, the unsaved are annihilated.

FOR ANSWER: Phil.1:23-24, 2 Cor.5:1-8, Matt.10:28, 25:46

#### D. SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

Mrs. White asserted that the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment needed more attention than all the others. The mark of the beast is seen as worshipping on the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday) "Jesus has purchased redemption for us.

It is ours, but we are placed on probation to see if we prove ourselves worthy of it and eternal life.”

Remember that Seventh Day Adventists, unlike movements like the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses can contain genuine born again believers, it is not an ‘anti Christian’ cult. Many of their statements concerning the deity of Christ, his resurrection and the necessity of personal faith in Christ seem to be Biblical, but need to be tested.

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Mary Baker Eddy founded Christian Science in 1866. She died in 1910 aged 89 years. She wrote Science and Health with key to the Scriptures, which she claimed was divine and unerring. The Bible was her “sufficient guide” yet she contradicted it.

### GOD

God is in everything and is everything

God is not a person.

God is good and all that is good is mind i.e. God = Mind (or spirit)

Because God is spirit, everything that is not spirit does not exist, so matter does not exist because it is not spirit.

Therefore, material things such as disease, sin death, and evil do not exist. (**Deut.4:35, 1Tim. 2:5, Matt. 3 16-17**, God is Personal.

### CHRIST

Jesus - the most spiritual man who ever lived, NOT DIVINE

Jesus as a human man was not Christ. They deny the deity of Christ. (**Jn.10:30, Matt.16:16-17, Jn. 14:9, Jesus is divine and Christ.**

### HOLY SPIRIT

**“Jn. 16:16 “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter...”**

Mrs. Eddy says, “This comforter I understand to be Divine Science.”

The Holy Spirit is nothing more than science and is not a person. (**Jn. 14:16,17,26, 15:26, 16:7,8,13,14**) **The Holy Spirit is a PERSON.**

### THE FALL OF MAN AND SIN

Man never fell from his high estate. (**Gen.2:16-17, 3:17**) **Man did fall from his high estate and death is the penalty.**

“Man is deathless, spiritual. He is above sin or frailty. He coexists with God...”

(**Matt.10:28, Ez. 18:23,27.**) **Matthew says that both body and soul can be destroyed.**

**Ezekiel says that man can die and that eternal life is conditional on our repentance.**

Therefore, man did fall and neither his body nor his soul is immortal.

### SIN.

Mrs. Eddy denies the Fall, death and the capacity to sin. “Man is incapable of sin.”

Since man is not matter, man must be soul.

**BUT, Ez.18:14 “The soul that sinneth, it shall die”. (Jn. 1:8, 8:34) We are capable of sinning.**

Man is never separated from God (**Is.59:2**) **“Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.”**

### ATONEMENT OR WORK OF CHRIST IN DYING.

No sin, so Christ did not die to save us but only to show “goodness” for mankind.

(**Matt.26:28, Mk 10:45.**) **Christ died for us. Also (1 Cor.15:3, 1Peter 2:24)**

### PRAYER

“Prayer is not to be used as a confessional to cancel sin, if prayer nourishes belief that sin is cancelled, and that man is made better by praying, prayer is an evil.”

(**Lk. 11:1, 23:24, 1Jn 1:9. All these speak of praying for forgiveness and confession of sin.**

“No final judgement awaits mortals.” (**Mal.25:31-46, 2Cor. 5:10.**

### HEALING (See also under God)

“A physical diagnosis of disease - tends to induce disease” So doctors are taboo and the healings which they claim are not substantiated by doctors. Mrs. Eddy says that as matter does not exist, neither does disease.