

Sun Myung Moon, Mormons and America's Biggest Cult

Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church and self-proclaimed "savior of all humanity," died this week at age 92. He didn't save the world, nor did the couples he married in mass weddings produce a race of sinless children, as he predicted they would.

With all respect for his Korean heritage, I think Moon was just plain weird. Once a Presbyterian, he rejected orthodox Christianity by teaching that Jesus failed in His mission because He did not marry and have children. Moon's zombie-like followers, who sold carnations to raise money, will never see a dime of the millions he made through his many international businesses.

Moon's group joins a nefarious list of destructive **cults** that manipulated people into following bogus spirituality. Also included are (1) Jim Jones' group, the Peoples Temple, which led to the tragic Kool-Aid deaths of 909 people in 1978; (2) the Branch Davidians, the cult led by David Koresh that ended in a fiery standoff at their compound in Waco, Texas, in 1993; and (3) Heaven's Gate, a strange astrological cult that convinced followers they could hitch a ride to eternal life on the Hale-Bopp comet. (Thirty-nine members of that group committed suicide in California in 1997.)

Most destructive cults don't have a long shelf life, since the founders are prone to either suicide, crime or violence. But after Moon's death this week I wondered: What are the most dangerous cults in the world today?

You might think **Scientology** is huge, since Hollywood actors such as Tom Cruise promote it. But experts say there are not more than 200,000 Scientologists in the world. Apparently its

founder, L. Ron Hubbard—a science fiction writer—didn't convince too many people to spend thousands of dollars on “spiritual audits” in order to unleash their god-like nature.

Christian apologists usually list Mormonism and **Jehovah's Witnesses** as the largest cults in the world. It's true that many of their core doctrines contradict the Bible. It's also disturbing that Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, practiced immorality, advocated violence and used smoke, mirrors and bogus golden plates to compile his Mormon holy book.

Yet **Mormonism** today has been sanitized and mainstreamed, and many Mormons have distanced themselves from their radical beginnings while focusing on family values. I'm not defending their doctrines, which I consider creepy and (with apologies to Mitt Romney) demonic. I'm saying I don't believe Mormonism is as big of a threat as we've made it out to be.

So what is the biggest cult in our country today? It's the cult of secularism. It outnumbers Mormons, Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Moonies combined. Its priests and evangelists are in our media, government and education system—and they have even infiltrated mainline churches. Their goal is to reshape culture in the image of their idols, which include:

1. The idol of atheism. The number of **atheists** is increasing in Western countries, and anti-God ideas have taken control of many of our universities. If you think *Real Time's* Bill Maher sounds angry when he talks about religion, just read some of the anti-religious vitriol being published today by American professors. Atheists are in recruiting mode; they are actually starting “churches” for discussions and support.

2. The idol of free sex. People who don't believe in the true God can conveniently ignore morality. As a result, America has become an orgy nation. We've built a massive altar to Baal as we pump porn into the airwaves for global consumption. A

hedonistic cult has emerged, and its leaders demand that we celebrate all forms of perversion without asking whether this behavior is healthy or if it might invite God's judgment.

3. The idol of state control. In the cult of **secularism**, we are expected to bow to the almighty federal government—which supposedly has the power to meet all of our material needs. And we, the helpless minions, are supposed to pay our taxes and fawn over our enlightened leaders as we build the great society—regardless of how deeply we go into debt in the process. (Note: If you question whether President Obama has a “cult following,” tune into the Democratic Convention this week and listen to the newscasters.)

4. The idol of anti-Christian intolerance. The threat of **Islamic terrorism** is real, but I'm not as concerned about al-Qaida as I am about leaders in our own country who don't respect faith or decent Christian values (and this is true of both Democrats and Republicans). Anti-religious bigots have declared war on everything that made this country respectable, and they are looking for followers.

Please don't bow to the idols of our culture. Don't let the cult of secularism force you to drink their Kool-Aid. Let's stand for Jesus faithfully no matter how much we are pressured to conform.

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project. He is the author of 10 Lies Men Believe and other books. You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady.*