

# Spiritual Siblings

## The Function of New Religions in Peoples Temple Doctrine

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**ABSTRACT:** For years after Peoples Temple ceased to exist, both scholars and the public debated the Temple's status as a new religious movement. These debates left out an important perspective: Jim Jones' own evaluation of the Temple's relation to new religions. This article uses Doug McAdam's work on social movement formation to organize Jones' commentary on new religions. Expanding Stephen Kent's concept of spiritual kinship lineage, this article argues that Jones identified the same political changes as giving rise to, as well as contesting, both Peoples Temple and various new religious movements. By identifying this plethora of reactions to the same political cause, Jones legitimated the Temple's worldview and subsequent mobilization. Moreover, Jones leveraged this kinship to avail himself of the variety of strategies utilized by these groups while pointing out their doctrinal, organizational, and political flaws, thus asserting the Temple's superiority in the process.

**KEYWORDS:** Jim Jones, Peoples Temple, Jonestown, spiritual kinship, Doug McAdam

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In the aftermath of the mass murder-suicides of Peoples Temple members in Jonestown, Guyana, on 18 November 1978, both scholars and the public struggled to categorize this movement that wove racial concerns into a socialist interpretation of the New Testament. Depending on one's definitions and goals, Peoples Temple appeared as a church, a cult or new religious movement, a political organization, or even a CIA experiment.<sup>1</sup> The argument as to whether or not Peoples Temple was a new religious movement has ramifications for members of new religions as well as academics. As Eileen Barker observed, the Temple's tragic and well-known end meant that "no new religion would be regarded in quite the same light or treated in quite the same way after Jonestown."<sup>2</sup> Matters of accuracy, definition, identity, and legacy are all at stake when classifying Peoples Temple.

Assessing the adequacy of labelling Peoples Temple a new religious movement, historically, involves invoking an external set of criteria—usually regarding demographics and doctrines—and then measuring the Temple's fulfilment of the typology.<sup>3</sup> The variety of criteria available to scholars when delineating the category "new religious movements," combined with the Temple's own multifaceted membership and interests, leaves room for an assortment of conclusions. At the same time, repeatedly exhuming Jonestown's final days in efforts to uphold or alter the Temple's categorization is a questionable act of historical metonymy, in which knowledge of the events in Jonestown on 18 November 1978 stands for knowledge of the movement as a whole. The absence of suicidal ideations in the Temple's earliest history, as well as the matter of allowing one single day, no matter how momentous, to dictate the interpretation of a social movement that existed for nearly 25 years, casts such metonymy in a questionable light. Despite these issues, it is still possible to inquire into Peoples Temple's relationship with the category "new religious movement" in a way that enlarges one's understanding of both the movement and the category.

This article explores the function of Temple leader Jim Jones' (1931–1978) references to new religious movements in Peoples Temple audio recordings. In at least four Temple services held in the United States between 1973 and 1976, and in at least seven recordings of news commentary in Jonestown in 1978, Jones variously discussed the Church of Scientology International, the Children of God, the Unification Church, and MOVE, as well as the healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman.<sup>4</sup> Individually, these references take the form of Jones relaying news or commenting on current events. When grouped together, however, these references constitute an attempt by Jones to create what Stephen Kent calls a spiritual kinship lineage, a process wherein new religions ideologically, mythically, or structurally connect themselves to respected or legitimate social groups to draw on their status.<sup>5</sup> While other scholars have noted Jones' reliance on the social

gospel, the black church, and socialism in constructing Temple doctrine, I will demonstrate that Jones cultivated a fourth lineage: legitimation based on the proliferation of multiple social movement organizations in response to the same political events.

To inject the thematic coherence necessary to observe this kinship, I will structure my interaction with Jones' speeches according to sociologist Doug McAdam's political process model of social movement formation. In its initial form, McAdam's model argues that three elements are always present when generating a successful social movement: "political opportunities" that diminish the risks of mobilization, "indigenous organizational strength" that mobilized people can draw upon, and "cognitive awareness" that liberation is both necessary and possible.<sup>6</sup> Jones' rhetorical interactions with new religions all point to a single political opportunity—the rise of American fascism—that caused their formation and hindered their survival. Although Jones acknowledged that each group differed in its response to this opportunity, he pointed to their common origin as a means of justifying and legitimating the Temple's own existence and validity. Moreover, Jones used this common point of origin to avail himself of the variety of tools and techniques employed by new religions.

Bruce Lincoln cautions religious studies scholars against "permit[ting] those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood."<sup>7</sup> In this article I do not intend to uncritically use Jones' own conception of Peoples Temple to classify the movement, far less to allow Jones as a single individual to define the entire group. I suggest, instead, that scrutinizing Jones' teachings expands our knowledge of Peoples Temple and informs our understanding of new religions as social movements.

## **SPIRITUAL KINSHIP LINEAGES IN PEOPLES TEMPLE**

The arguments for and against categorizing Peoples Temple as a new religious movement are complicated by the previously-mentioned uncertainty concerning how to define "new religious movements." This uncertainty mirrors the broader difficulty of academically defining "religion."<sup>8</sup> To complicate matters further, the nature of Peoples Temple itself resists easy classification. By design, Jones shaped the Temple in the image of a social gospel outreach organization, a black church, and a socialistic commune. Mary McCormick Maaga suggests that the appropriate designation depends on which Temple members one is looking at and what period of the Temple's history one examines.<sup>9</sup> In this light Peoples Temple was both new and old, radical and mainstream, since it contained various sub-populations and drew on various socio-cultural trends. This surfeit of identities borrowed from extant social and political organizations makes describing the Temple

as a “new” movement difficult. As James Richardson concludes, “Peoples Temple was not really new at all,” but instead took extant ideologies and groups in new directions.<sup>10</sup>

This difficulty is not lost to theorists. Jamie Hubbard claims that new religions are “often most consciously concerned [with] . . . the rejections of the label ‘new’ through the articulation of their own place within a doctrinal tradition.”<sup>11</sup> Hubbard quickly nuances this remark by adding that “this is not to say, however, that new religions are not concerned with being new in the sense of more appropriate to the times, . . . a needed reform, a new institutional configuration, or the like.”<sup>12</sup> The designation “new,” then, is both accurate and misleading in regard to new religions.

Kent’s concept of spiritual kinship lineage echoes Hubbard’s views by observing the sociological function of attempts by new religions to establish themselves in a way that distances themselves from the qualifier “new.” Kent suggests that “the very nature of new religions’ origins and ongoing charismatic dynamics heighten their need to legitimate themselves, even as opponents attempt to discredit them, and researchers try to classify them.”<sup>13</sup> To provide this legitimation, new religions may make “spiritual lineage claims”; that is, new religions may portray themselves as being related to established religious traditions.<sup>14</sup> If the links between the new religious group and the established religion are perceived to be clear enough, then the group can legitimate itself by drawing on various resources that the established religion provides. Most importantly, these resources include society’s respect. In Kent’s words, “if outsiders . . . accept the reality of these connections, then the new religions will receive benefits and status similar to what society bestows on the established and respected tradition.”<sup>15</sup>

Kent outlines six types of lineages that new religions can claim when crafting spiritual kinship, ranging from sharing “spiritual connections with existing major faiths” to subsuming and surpassing multiple established groups.<sup>16</sup> Thus, appeals to spiritual kinship are attempts to distance the groups in question from the qualifier “new” in order to benefit from the respect afforded to established religious traditions.

Responding to the same difficulty as Hubbard, Kent acknowledges that new religions cannot simply claim to be an instantiation of an established religion. Instead, elements of adaptation, modification, purification, or revelation need to accompany spiritual kinship claims. For instance, Kent remarks that claims are most likely to succeed “when the [extant] faith has an outreach tradition . . . that recognizes the need for cultural adjustments.”<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, he notes that new religions may “insist that their messages are the fulfillment of everything that has come before them” or claim to have “rediscovered or found the purity or truth heretofore neglected or forgotten” by other religions.<sup>18</sup> By doing so, the new groups differentiate themselves from established traditions. Spiritual kinship lineage, then, depends on two maneuvers. First, it

depends on a group's ability to convincingly link itself to established, respected social institutions. Second, spiritual kinship lineage depends on exposing those establishments as somehow flawed or penultimate and, in turn, offering the new group as a reformed, restored, perfected, alternate, or ultimate expression of the truth.

Scholars observe three influences on Jones' development of doctrine in Peoples Temple: the social gospel, the black church, and socialism.<sup>19</sup> The first two of these influences exemplify spiritual kinship lineage as Kent describes it. Jones repeatedly identified the social gospel's pragmatic understanding of Jesus' teachings and the black church's worship styles and racial concerns as the Temple's antecedents.<sup>20</sup> This identification process demonstrates Kent's claim that new religions can "insist that their doctrines, beliefs, and behaviours share important spiritual connections with existing major faiths."<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Jones identified Peoples Temple's mandate of social engagement and political activism as the restoration of Jesus' message, unencumbered by institutionalized religion's convolutions or individual piety's hope for otherworldly emancipation. This latter identification exemplifies Kent's assertion that new religions can claim "to have rediscovered or found the purity or truth heretofore neglected or forgotten."<sup>22</sup>

The third influence, socialism,<sup>23</sup> suggests a type of lineage claim that Kent's articulation of spiritual kinship ignores: establishing legitimacy by associating with a *nonreligious* extant organization. As Jones grew disenchanted with capitalists and Christians, he ideologically and practically transformed the goals of the black church and the social gospel into socialism. In his American preaching he equated "the kingdom of righteousness" with "the new order of socialism," while in Guyana he finally asserted that "there's no salvation but socialism" (Q1028-A; Q977). A little more than a month before the Temple's end, Jones maintained that "we were not mistaken in allying our purposes, our destiny, with the destiny of the Soviet Union" (Q352).

Cold War America did not necessarily see this lineage of socialism as legitimate, just as 1950s white America did not necessarily see the black church as a respectable ancestor. Nevertheless, Jones cultivated kinship ties to these groups, as well as to the social gospel, to cast Peoples Temple as legitimate to both insiders and outsiders. Observing that Jones tried to legitimate the Temple in these ways introduces another type of spiritual kinship lineage that Kent does not discuss: legitimation created by associating with *illegitimate* religious groups.

## THE POLITICAL PROCESS MODEL

References to new religious movements are rare in Temple recordings, especially relative to Jones' frequent appeals to social gospel

practice, socialist ideology, and black church traditions. New religious movements appear in Temple recordings as a result of Jones' extemporaneous and issue-based preaching style, in which he used current events as both catalysts and evidence for his doctrine of "divine socialism" (Q1059-1). Formally speaking, then, Jones' comments regarding new religions exist as occasional and unrelated commentary on the news. When grouped together under a generalized form of McAdam's model of social movement formation, however, Jones' comments on new religious movements display ideological uniformity as well as an intent to generate a spiritual kinship lineage in order to legitimate the Temple's worldview. It should be noted that the observations Jones made when constructing this lineage were not always accurate representations of social, political, or religious matters. As Kent observes, the success of spiritual kinship claims lies not in their accuracy or their facticity, but in their believability.<sup>24</sup> Jones's comments below are acts of myth-making in Bruce Lincoln's sense of "myth"—their efficacy in creating spiritual lineages lies in the authority and credibility granted to them by Jones and his audience, not in empirically factual content.<sup>25</sup> Both empirically true and purely imagined religious beliefs can lead to real actions and consequences.<sup>26</sup>

McAdam identifies "political opportunities" as the first element necessary to produce a social movement. For McAdam, social change generates opportunities for social mobilization, whether by making groups in power (i.e., "members") more vulnerable to challenge or giving disempowered groups (i.e., "challengers") greater access to the power necessary to instigate change.<sup>27</sup> Any "cultural factors and processes" can produce the social change necessary to destabilize the power system or lessen the gap between members and challengers, although McAdam emphasizes the political ramifications of events.<sup>28</sup> The nature of these political opportunities will affect the form, timing, and extent of the resultant social movements: the degree of destabilization correlates to the number of challengers who will benefit.<sup>29</sup> In essence, "political opportunities" refers to socio-political changes that either lower the risks of social mobilization or raise the chances of a mobilized group achieving its goals.

The second factor that McAdam identifies in his political process model is "indigenous organizational strength," later re-tooled and adapted as "mobilizing structures." Social groups are more likely to manipulate political opportunities, according to McAdam, if they have access to extant social resources.<sup>30</sup> Social movements, in other words, do not spring up out of thin air, instead, they erupt from within already-existing populations and groups.<sup>31</sup> These groups provide the new movement with pre-existing social networks and motivating factors that bind people together or encourage group membership.<sup>32</sup> Indigenous strengths are culturally conditioned and vary depending on the

population in question; they can, however, be modified by emergent movements or appropriated and employed beyond their initial population.<sup>33</sup> Aggrieved populations, then, can borrow and alter ideological and practical resources that they are already familiar with in order to mobilize.

Political opportunities and indigenous organizational strength alone will not guarantee a social movement's emergence. Indeed, these two elements, although necessary preconditions, can remain untapped without the third and final aspect of McAdam's political process model: "cognitive liberation." This element acknowledges that "people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations" must be present in order to capitalize on political opportunities and utilize indigenous resources.<sup>34</sup> These people, moreover, must believe that their social situation is both undesirable and subject to change.<sup>35</sup> As the political process model developed over time, scholars preferred to speak of "framing processes," or "the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action" instead of cognitive liberation.<sup>36</sup> In either case, a social group that correctly identifies an opportune moment to change its situation using pre-existing tools and networks is necessary to create a social movement.

Since Jones did not deliberately employ McAdam's theory, one must approximate some aspects of the political process model in order to categorize Jones' comments regarding new religions. His remarks most closely adhere to McAdam's work in regard to expanding political opportunities. As I will demonstrate, Jones clearly articulated the political changes that facilitated the creation, as well as the suppression, of Peoples Temple and various new religions. This similarity of origin constitutes a spiritual kinship lineage: the presence of multiple populations identifying the same political situation as undesirable legitimated Jones' political concerns about capitalist/fascist America.

Jones' pragmatic interest in new religions, however, requires one to generalize the factors of indigenous organizational strength and cognitive liberation. He turned to new religions not as concrete examples of theoretical sociological processes but rather as alternate expressions of the fight against fascism whose organizational makeup, activities, and populations could be evaluated as potentially useful for achieving the Temple's own goals. As mentioned above, movements can appropriate and adjust the resources of other groups in their quest to effect change, and this purpose is evident in Jones' rhetorical use of new religions.

Indigenous organizational strengths, then, appear in the form of Jones' evaluations of the practical means that new religions drew on to mobilize, function, and achieve their goals. In Temple recordings, these means included leadership structures and what McAdam terms "change strategies," that is, the activities that movements participated in.<sup>37</sup> Cognitive liberation, finally, appears in Jones' preaching in limited

discussions of the worldviews that hold populations together and encourage mobilization.<sup>38</sup> As I describe below, he spoke only obliquely of other groups' worldviews by contrasting them with the Temple's superior ideological robustness.

### **FEAR OF FASCISTS AND FASCISTS' FEARS**

The Cold War's separation of the world into two competing ideologies—capitalism and communism—constituted the political shift that Jones identified in the 1970s as allowing new religious movements, including Peoples Temple, to arise. Jones mapped a capitalist-fascist/communist-socialist dualism onto the American racial dualism of black/white that had characterized the Temple's earliest concerns as well as the ethical dualism of evil/good that stemmed from its Christian lineage.<sup>39</sup> Peoples Temple occupied the socialist/black/good pole, while its detractors held the opposing fascist/white/evil pole.

Jones identified (white) America's embrace of (evil) capitalism as providing a political opportunity for challengers to establish themselves. Drawing on postwar political sentiments for rhetorical force, Jones identified American capitalism as fascism and claimed that the rise of new religious movements supported these observations. Jones used media coverage of the Children of God, MOVE, the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, and faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman to show that fascism in America had bred a political climate that generated, as well as tried to suffocate, opportunities for insurgents.

Jones identified the Children of God as a kindred group that correctly assessed the opportunities and dangers that America's fascist political climate provided. During a 1974 meditation on one of the group's pamphlets he concluded that, despite their focus on "sex and malarkey," the Children of God and its leader, David Berg, had the "intelligence to see that it's fascism that's coming into America" (Q1024). Although wrapped up in innuendo, Berg's pamphlets "say just enough that New York has got them investigated, and Colorado is investigating them and every newspaper is lambasting them because they called America one word: fascist" (Q1024). In 1978, Jones observed that Scientology, like Peoples Temple, had identified Nazi influences in both American government organizations and INTERPOL (Q188; Q194; Q259; Q353). Jones described Scientology as "another cooperative group that dares to . . . sho[w] the increase of Nazis in influence" (Q194). Also in Jonestown in 1978, Jones praised the Philadelphia-based MOVE group for its "beautiful" media popularity and "solidarity amongst black people" generated by the group's active willingness to disrupt "the fascist Supreme Cour[t]" (Q284). Like Jonestown residents, "the group says that all it wants is to be left alone," but instead drew the ire of fascists by

creating an alternative way of life (Q284). MOVE, Scientology, and the Children of God appear in these recordings as challengers to the power-holders by virtue of their supposed opposition to fascism.

Jones saw the political opportunities afforded by American fascism as most clearly demonstrated in negative press coverage given to new religions. If Temple doctrine equated fascism with capitalism, and capitalism (that is, evil) as ultimately inferior to socialism (that is, good), then America's embrace of an inferior ideological system strengthened the position of insurgent groups like new religions.<sup>40</sup> According to the political process model, populations that mobilize in response to political opportunities in turn create a(nother) new political opportunity that others, including the original power-holders, can respond to.<sup>41</sup> Since the very presence of new religions—that is, challengers of the power structure—signaled potential weakness in America's fascist power-holders, the fascists had to discredit their challengers by mischaracterizing them through the media.

Jones argued that the press printed "lies" and identified its mandate as "crucifying socialists and black people," resulting in an oversaturation of spiteful print at the expense of factual coverage (Q591; Q733). Amidst growing political and media interest in Jonestown, Jones humorlessly noted that "Peoples Temple is being set aside for a few days [by the media]. . . . Now the attack again is focusing on Scientology" (Q194). According to Jones, negative press covering any challengers "makes nice copy [and] makes great fear tactics" (Q194). This negative coverage left the media no time to report, however, on abuses that concerned the Temple. In one reading of the news, Jones observed that "it is amazing that there is not one bit of news in the U.S. papers about [concentration camps and killing blacks]" (Q188).

Negative press and fear tactics were necessary because new religious movements promoted ideologies that challenged fascism; as Jones argued, "anyone with a moron brain could see that the only reason you get smeared is because you stand for something" (Q194). More importantly, these ideologies correctly assessed America's fascist nature as dangerous and weak. Commenting on the American media's "pious circus of being concerned about Huey Newton, and Jim Jones, and . . . Synanon, and Scientology," Jones concluded that "they [the press] register concern because they [the Black Panthers, Peoples Temple, Synanon, and Scientology] are bringing out the truth" (Q188).

The most enlightening set of observations from Jones on negative press coverage of new religious movements came in a 1974 sermon regarding Kathryn Kuhlman and the Children of God. In this sermon, Jones discussed a recent media event that exposed Kuhlman's healing abilities as fake. Although he scoffed that he had always known that Kuhlman "was nothing," told his audience that "good socialists like us won't even wanna be caught in the category [of believing in faith

healing],” and saw spiritual healing as “crazy,” Jones nevertheless considered the implications of Kuhlman’s defrocking for the Temple (Q952). In Jones’ eyes, Kuhlman had to be discredited because her following constituted a population that potentially stood to challenge fascist American leaders: “[T]he government of this country wants to break down every kind of group outside of Big Brother. . . . [Kuhlman] represents a group of people that would look to her instead of whoever they [Big Brother] want to foster on us when the crisis comes, that final crash comes. . . . They want to break down all groups, and so they’re attacking her” (Q952). Jones later echoed this assessment of Kuhlman’s fall when discussing the Children of God, warning that “they’re after all these groups across the nation. Most fiercely, they’re after the Children of God movement. . . . [The Children of God] represents a group of people looking to somebody else other than good Old Glory. And so they’re after them and they’re gonna be after every group” (Q952).

These evaluations of negative press coverage as a counter-measure against potential insurgency reflect the political opportunity that Jones identified as existing in mid-twentieth century America. Like Peoples Temple, the Children of God and Kathryn Kuhlman threatened the political power-holders either by “bringing out the truth” or by representing potential centers for mobilization against fascism.

It is crucial to note that Jones claimed affinity with these groups on the basis of shared political opportunities rather than a uniform response to those opportunities. Recognition of the *same* opportunity to alter society, in other words, can breed *different* groups mobilizing *different* strengths to achieve *different* goals. In regard to political opportunities, however, Jones used the uniformity of media attacks against new religions to highlight the fear and ruthlessness of America’s fascists in the face of burgeoning dissent and opposition. America’s power-holders attacked any group that threatened their hegemony, regardless of political orientation. For instance, Jones evaluated MOVE’s teachings by saying, “[U]nfortunately, that’s anarchism, and we’re a little bit afraid of that. But we can sympathize with their distrust of government anyway” (Q284). Socialist Temple members and anarchist MOVE members suffered media mischaracterization because both responded to the same political weakening, although they did so in different ways and for different reasons.

Strikingly, Jones identified several other movements under attack as expressions not of socialism, but of fascism. While allowing that “the Children of God movement is a movement that’s taken a little bit of a socialistic lens,” Jones cited Berg’s separation from his followers and obsession with sex as evidence that the group was more properly “fascistic” and “certainly hedonistic” (Q952).<sup>42</sup> Regarding Kuhlman, Jones likewise warned listeners that “she’s as anti-socialist as

a rattlesnake” (Q952). Even though neither Berg nor Kuhlman represented a specifically socialist challenge to America’s power-holders, their popularity and autonomy threatened American fascists.

Most telling of fascism’s fears, however, was the media’s denunciation of Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church. The Unification Church initially appeared in Jones’ recorded speeches in 1976 in the context of a political scandal regarding South Korean attempts to influence the United States Congress.<sup>43</sup> While the Children of God shared Jones’ disparaging view of America, the Unification Church shared little in terms of political orientation or practice with Peoples Temple. Since the Unification Church supported American patriotism and capitalism, Jones could not suggest that it arose as a challenge to fascism. Instead, Jones portrayed Moon as a problem-causing or embarrassing ally of fascists (see Q733). Addressing the group’s country of origin as well as its current function in the United States, Jones identified South Korea as a “fascist” and “dreaded regime”<sup>44</sup> and labeled the Unification Church a CIA front group as well as an “alien anti-socialist religion that’s all over America” (Q733; Q965).

Despite the Unification Church’s political stance, Jones told Temple members that Moon’s “brand of fascism” did not exactly mirror that of Big Brother or Old Glory, and consequently American fascist power-holders branded Moon a deviant (Q284). Reflecting on the fear of insurgency that promoted negative press coverage, Jones remarked that “the deviations of the right are feared as much . . . as the deviation[s] of the left” (Q284). Moreover, he concluded that Moon’s treatment in the media showed the ruthlessness of fascist attempts to quell insurgency: fascists “don’t come to the rescue” when the actions of one of their own adherents endangered their political hegemony (Q733).

Although Jones’ remarks concerning the Children of God, MOVE, Kathryn Kuhlman, Scientology, and the Unification Church took place largely independently of one another, they demonstrate a consistent understanding of the influence of the Cold War’s dualistic separation of socialism/communism and capitalism/fascism on new religious movements. The gradual, post-war rise of fascism in America produced a political opportunity wherein American power-holders embraced a weak, but dangerous, ideology. Peoples Temple and other social movements emerged on account of this ideological weakening, and America’s fascists, in turn, responded to these groups by attempting to suppress their credibility.

Jones promoted affinity between Peoples Temple and new religious movements on the basis of their shared response to political opportunities, rather than doctrinal similarities. The fraud Kuhlman, the sex-obsessed Berg, the anarchists in MOVE, the deviant Moon, and the socialist revolutionary Jones all emerged as leaders of social movements as a result of expanding political opportunities caused by Cold War duality

and the rise of fascism in America. This proliferation of social movements functioned in Peoples Temple doctrine as a spiritual kinship lineage. By demonstrating that each group emerged as a result of the economic, political, and ideological forces that he preached about, Jones legitimated his characterization of America through multiple attestations. The presence of myriad social movement organizations in reaction to the rise of fascism that Jones described in his preaching, in other words, legitimated his own racially-integrated socialistic challenger position.

## **THE STRATEGIES OF LESSER REVOLUTIONARIES**

Describing Jones' commentary on new religious movements in terms of political opportunities explains only half of the spiritual kinship lineage process. Once a lineage is asserted, the task still remains for the new group to defend its existence by differentiating itself from its kin. Jones set Peoples Temple apart from these new religious movements on the basis of methods and members. While in some cases he admired the other movements' tactics, he concluded that Peoples Temple possessed the most spirited members whose efforts to change society drew the harshest criticism from the Temple's fascist enemies.

Jones evaluated the organizational and leadership styles of the Children of God and the Unification Church in such a way as to assert the superiority of the Temple's own practices. He cautioned members not to equate their leader, i.e., himself, with David Berg or Sun Myung Moon, explaining that the latter two men exploited their followers while shirking their revolutionary opportunities. In 1976 Jones remarked that half of the Unification Church's yearly budget "went to their leader for Rolls Royces and a mansion over in New York" instead of funding revolutionary activities (Q965). In the fall of 1974, Jones noted that Berg "is living over in safety somewhere in Switzerland" before reminding his audience that "I'm not speaking from the comfort and confines of the Swiss Alps. I'm speaking right in the midst of this devilish scene" (Q1024). Berg's relative safety and comfort contrasted not only with Jones' location, but also the position of the Children of God's members: "He's layin' in a ski resort, been laying there for ten years. All of his children pass out his literature and get . . . three hundred dollars a week, have to turn it all in to him. . . . He doesn't do a thing to start any revolution except print some [sex pamphlets]" (Q1024). Reading to Jonestown residents some years later, Jones stated that "making a revolution is, in the first place and primarily, a practical activity." This assertion fit well with the construction of the Temple's agricultural commune but reflected poorly on Berg's European hideaway (Q284).

Jones further extrapolated on this point to chastise the Children of God's communitarian structure. Claiming that "the upper class leaders

have sex with whoever they please and do whatever they please and live in the Swiss Alps, getting ten million dollars a year.” Jones nevertheless allowed that the Children of God “have communes all across the nation” (Q952). Upon inspection, however, these communes subjugated rather than liberated participants. Bundling a critique of complainers in Peoples Temple with a critique of Berg’s movement, Jones said that “they cannot even pay a penny extra for bus fare without itemizing it. They have one suit of clothes only. You talk about communal discipline, you don’t know what communalism is in this place. I mean, those people are stripped, and [Berg] lives up high on the hog” (Q1024). This critique implicitly reminded listeners of Jones’ frequent claim to have no special status or privileges in Peoples Temple. Consider, for instance, his self-description: “I haven’t come to milk you. I haven’t come to get your money. I drive no new cars, have no new furniture, have no new clothes, never buy anything. . . . [I] don’t want to waste your money” (Q1059-3). Although journalists reveal that Jones lived closer to his description of Moon and Berg than his self-description,<sup>45</sup> he nevertheless used other groups’ leadership styles and organizational structures to promote the Temple’s socialist and communalist ideology.

By noting the wasteful, unfair, or counter-productive financial management and leadership in new religions, Jones set Peoples Temple apart on the grounds of its own communitarian focus. In other instances, however, Jones promoted the resources and strengths used by new religious movements to generate social change. Following McAdam’s notion that groups may appropriate or borrow organizational resources from other groups, Jones extended this appropriation to include groups whose ideals he rejected, explaining that “I’ll take anything I can get from anybody to give the people that have long since deserved a little, some freedom” (Q1059-3).

Scientology appears in Temple recordings as a new religious movement whose doctrines Jones disagreed with but whose methods he approved of. In 1973, Jones leveled criticism at Scientology’s teachings reminiscent of his frequent diatribes against the Christian God—namely, the absurdity of worshipping an all-powerful being that allowed injustice and marginalization. In this sermon, he characterized Scientology’s explanation of human origins as follows: “[T]hey say we came from an outer, another planet, [a] higher developed planet and we got lost and that we’re finally gonna get ourselves back to that planet” (Q1053-1). Jones challenged the usefulness of believing such a story, for “if that planet’s so highly evolved, I say it should come down here and do something about this mess. . . . Anyone that’s got power and won’t use it with the kind of suffering I see everyday [is a cruel being]” (Q1053-1).

By 1978, however, Jones’ interest in Scientology had shifted. In the early 1970s Jones needed evidence to support his critiques of Christianity, its God, and its attitude toward human suffering. But by

the late 1970s, Jones needed advice on more pressing concerns: how to handle the Temple's mounting legal challenges and political inquisitions.<sup>46</sup> Seeing Scientology's legal troubles arising from stories of the movement's attempted infiltration of government offices and theft of documents, Jones reflected on Scientology's method of fighting its fascist opponents.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Jones took an interest in Scientology's use of lawsuits to deal with its detractors.

Q194 contains a lengthy commentary on the *San Francisco Chronicle* article "An Author vs. Scientology Church," which discusses Scientology's response to Paulette Cooper's 1971 exposé *The Scandal of Scientology*.<sup>48</sup> In particular, Jones expressed interest in the article's reports of Scientology's use of litigation in response to Cooper's book. After reading that "her publisher was sued, and harassed to the point that he withdrew the book from circulation," and further that "the church of Scientology sued her in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, England, Scotland, Australia, Ontario, [and] British Columbia," Jones mused that "there's something to be said for suits. I wish we could think about that" (Q194). The article also claimed that individuals tampered with library records to hinder Cooper's investigation: "[W]hen she [Cooper] went to the New York City Central Library . . . she found that all references to Scientology had been removed with a sharp instrument" (Q194). While Jones expressed doubt about the story's implication that Scientologists were responsible, he decided that "if they did, bless them for trying to cut away the lies" (Q194). Summarizing Scientology's strategy of dealing with negative press as described in the *Chronicle*, Jones concluded that "it helps to put people on the goddamn defensive. Let's think about this" (Q194). As an organization arising from the same political opportunity as the Temple, Scientology's handling of criticism and "lies" was potentially appealing.

Jones' evaluation of MOVE's offensive and defensive tactics was similarly adulatory. When Jones picked up the MOVE story in May 1978, the group had been under surveillance and blockade from Philadelphia police for approximately a year, and negotiations between the city and MOVE regarding criminal charges and MOVE's behavior increasingly broke down.<sup>49</sup> Jones highlighted MOVE's stalling tactics, noting that the continuous surveillance of the group cost the city "1.2 million dollars in overtime pay each month" (Q284). Moreover, Jones noted that, despite this continuous presence, "police have not been able to serve warrants which were issued for the arrest of 18 members of MOVE" (Q284). Impressed, Jones referred to MOVE's insurgency as "beautiful, beautiful, beautiful" and "amazing" and claimed that Peoples Temple had "made overtures to this group" (Q284), although his comments on the tape call Jones' prior familiarity with MOVE into question.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to praising these delaying tactics designed to challenge and frustrate their opponents, Jones noted that MOVE used threats of

violence as a technique of insurgency. MOVE's arsenal of "explosives" and "at least 14 weapons, some capable of automatic firing," combined with the group's confrontations with police officers, directly contributed to their ability to hold out against the superior forces of their political enemies (Q284). Relating Jonestown's siege mentality to MOVE's situation, Jones told residents that "[MOVE's success] gives some point to what we could do if anyone was threatening our internal freedom here" (Q284). Ultimately, however, Jones suggested that Peoples Temple could aid MOVE through resorting to nonviolent legal solutions by "negotiating their release" (Q284).

It is worth noting that one of Jones' first rhetorical maneuvers in Q284's coverage of MOVE is to observe that "the MOVE movement is much like the Red Brigade[s]," an Italian left-wing militant group (Q284).<sup>51</sup> As with his evaluation of MOVE, Jones elsewhere displayed a complicated view of violence as a means of achieving one's goals. In some instances, Jones condoned the violent methods of politically-motivated militant groups such as the Red Brigades or the German Baader-Meinhof Gang (Q197; Q253; Q284; Q414; Q767).<sup>52</sup> In other instances, however, Jones rejected violence as a precursor to anarchy or a deviation from socialist practice (Q733; Q738). This sometimes-simultaneous acceptance and rejection of violence finds its way into Q284, where Jones surmised that the threat of armed violence could thwart the Temple's enemies. At the same time, however, he reminded residents that "we are not offensive in our design, we do not believe in violence and our children must be taught that we do not have weapons. . . . But we will protect our freedom, obviously we will fight for our freedom" (Q284). In this excerpt Jones simultaneously decried and avowed violence as a means of obtaining the Temple's goal of living apart from America's fascist system.

A final example of Jones' willingness to simultaneously utilize and condemn the tactics of new religious movements appears in his comments about Kathryn Kuhlman. As discussed earlier, Jones dismissed Kuhlman's faith healings as fraudulent and "crazy." This dismissal put Jones in a difficult position, however, because faith healing featured prominently in many Peoples Temple services.<sup>53</sup> To escape contradiction, Jones explained that, for both himself and Kuhlman, the practice of faith healing helped attract a following: "[P]eople don't seem to think we have a reason to be here unless we can pull rabbits out of a hat, or get some kind of a hilarious feeling from an emphasis on spiritual healing" (Q952). Although Jones hoped that "we ought to have a loyalty that keeps us in this room," he recognized that the promise of faith healing could instill interest (Q952). Accusing certain tired audience members, Jones said "I think that there's many of you that will not stay—in fact, I have to repeatedly wake you up—when I'm talking on the truth, and you're very much awake when we're healing somebody" (Q952).

Extending this line of thought, Jones defended both his and Kuhlman's faith healing as a conduit for a larger message. Under pressure to defend her charlatanism, Kuhlman explained that "I'm bringing everyone to God. . . . If I don't heal anyone. . . [at least] I brought [the 'healed' individuals] to God and the Holy Spirit" (Q952). Jones' larger message, by contrast, refocused the concept of health and salvation from Kuhlman's God of the Bible to Jones' God as divine socialism. Claiming that "the spirit of socialism in me" brought about healing, Jones declared that "I'm God," but tempered his God-language with the warning that "I shall remain that [i.e., God] as long as you people hold on to superstitions" (Q952).<sup>54</sup> Faith healing as a strategy for Kuhlman and Jones worked not as a tool for restoring physical health, but rather as a conduit for their ideological messages.

As I have shown, Jones' commentary on new religions in the media included remarks pertaining to their organizational styles as well as the change strategies used to achieve the movements' goals. By establishing kinship with new religions, Jones expanded the repertoire of choices available to Peoples Temple: to the black church's protest marches and socialism's propaganda, new religions added Scientology's lawsuits and MOVE's armed threats. In reference to the opulent lifestyles led by the leaders of the Unification Church and the Children of God, Jones promoted the Temple's own egalitarian claims, setting it apart from its spiritual kin. In reference to the legal and illegal change strategies employed by Scientology and MOVE, however, Jones considered appropriating organizational practices that he felt would fit the Jonestown community's needs. As his remarks on Kuhlman's healing demonstrate, this appropriation did not necessitate embracing the ideologies that lay behind the strategies. Both Kuhlman and Jones used the same method to propagate opposite messages, and neither used faith healing for the simple purpose of restoring physical health.

While Jones' discussions of the organizational strengths of new religious movements yields a complex blend of admiration and condemnation, his discussions of the people who made up Peoples Temple reinforce the Temple's dominance over Scientology, the Children of God, and Kuhlman's audiences. Although the body of evidence that corresponds to McAdam's process of cognitive liberation is smaller than those corresponding to political opportunities or indigenous organizational strength, it clearly articulates the supremacy of Peoples Temple's members and their worldviews over their new religious siblings.

Jones commented three times in 1978 on the superiority of Peoples Temple over the new religions discussed above. In the first instance, Jones reflected on MOVE's ability to hold out "since last May a year ago, twelve months now" against the Philadelphia police despite being outnumbered and blockaded (Q284). Enumerating the number of MOVE members as well as their suspected arsenal, Jones told Jonestown

residents that “we’ve certainly got a better capacity to resist, and more bodies, and more arms” (Q284), although in reality this was unlikely. Beyond claims of superior numbers and armaments, however, Jones argued that Peoples Temple held an ideological advantage over MOVE. Although both groups drew on a shared experience of black persecution in America, MOVE fought back indiscriminately, vowing to “abolish all governments from here to Peking and Moscow” (Q284). The Temple, by contrast, held to a widely practiced and ostensibly viable ideology.

In a second instance, Jones explicitly compared Peoples Temple to Scientology when discussing the latter’s allegations of Nazi influence in American and international organizations. As quoted above, Jones argued that “the only reason you get smeared is because you stand for something” before adding that “we stand for more than any[body], and that’s why we’ve got the heaviest fire” (Q194). The troubles of the Black Panther Party, Synanon, and Scientology—all of which Jones had mentioned earlier in the recording—paled in comparison to Jonestown’s troubles on account of the robustness of socialist doctrine as well as the vigor with which Jonestown residents stood for their beliefs, as evidenced by its negative press.

In his third remark comparing the populations and coalescing worldviews of new religions and Peoples Temple, Jones explicitly noted the preeminence of himself and Temple members over their corresponding new religious populations. Again, Jones’ commentary took the form of discussing Scientology’s discovery of Nazis in INTERPOL and American political organizations, “as we did in the *Peoples Forum*” (Q188), the Temple’s irregularly published newspaper distributed on the streets of San Francisco. Even though both movements threatened fascist America through exposés, “Jim Jones, of course, is getting most of the attack, because he has a greater force to fight them with. [And] more informed people” (Q188).

Jones went on to clarify that this “greater force” of “more informed people” should be measured by fierceness of conviction, rather than by numbers. He explained that the American fascists

fear even a dozen people that know the truth. There should be nothing but an incensed indignity—a hatred, a passion that goes deep to our soul—against that system that holds domination. . . . We should hate U.S. imperialism. . . . How much do we have to hear to be inflamed in our motivation to build this community [Jonestown]? To be inflamed with the passion to protect it? (Q188)

This exhortation bolsters Jones’ conclusion that Peoples Temple held an ideological, rather than numerical, advantage over both its fascist opponents and contemporaneous new religious kin. The worldview that the Temple’s members coalesced around caused more fear because, when

combined with the population's indigenous strength, it held the greatest potential to bring about change. As the final series of questions reveals, however, this potential needed to be actualized in order to bring about the desired effect "for socialists' sake" (Q188). The Jonestown community, upon hearing of the political opportunities created by America's fascist power-holders, needed to draw on its "passion" in order to generate insurgency.

Thus Jones' comments regarding the new religious populations who noted political opportunities and utilized indigenous organizational strengths revealed both a promise and a warning to the Temple. In terms of a promise, Jones demonstrated that Peoples Temple, with socialist fervor spurring it forward, constituted a more potent source of change than new religious movements such as Scientology or MOVE. In terms of a warning, however, Jones reminded members that building and sustaining a social movement did not rest only on political opportunities or indigenous organizational strengths: the group's cognitive liberation needed to serve as a catalyst to action.

## CONCLUSION

This article analyzed Jones' commentary on various 1970s news stories regarding new religious movements according to McAdam's political process model of social movement formation. Overlaying McAdam's model on Temple recordings demonstrates that Jones invoked a spiritual kinship lineage predicated on the proliferation of social movements arising out of America's embrace of fascism and Cold War political dualism. In his discussions of the political changes that afforded challengers the opportunity to mobilize, Jones identified both Peoples Temple and various new religious movements as arising from the same opportunity: fascism's ascendancy and inherent weakness. By observing that such diverse groups as Scientology, the Children of God, the Unification Church, MOVE, and Kathryn Kuhlman's audiences all identified the same political situation as potentially enabling, Jones legitimated the Temple's genesis as well as its anti-American ideology. Furthermore, Jones saw the American media's negative portrayal of new religious movements as well as Peoples Temple as a sign that each group—despite their varied foci and ideas—constituted a similar threat to the power-holders. By linking Peoples Temple's origins to those of other embattled social movements, Jones encouraged his followers to interpret their own position as a legitimate reaction to their world.

Creating a spiritual kinship lineage, however, also necessitates distinguishing the new movement from its kin. Jones' commentary regarding the leadership styles, change strategies, and populations held together by a shared vision in new religious movements contributed to separating

the Temple from its spiritual kin. Although Jones weighed the effectiveness of certain change strategies favorably in the context of achieving People Temple's goals, he separated the Temple from other groups on the basis of leadership, ideological robustness, and fervor.

Kent's concept of spiritual kinship lineage demonstrates how new religious movements may trace their origins back to extant religious institutions in order to claim legitimacy or respectability. This article's findings indicate that Peoples Temple laid claim to legitimacy by establishing lineages that Kent does not explicate, including establishing legitimacy by claiming kinship with *nonreligious* social movements such as socialism and—the focus of this article—with a proliferation of *illegitimate* social movements. Jones' commentary on media coverage of new religious movements reveals that he understood the reaction to shared political opportunities by various challenger populations as validating the Temple's own birth and existence. In this type of spiritual kinship lineage, then, new religious movements can seek legitimacy by relating themselves to other illegitimate or challenger groups that emerge from the same socio-political shifts that facilitate their own mobilization. While the *nature* of these responses varies according to indigenous organizational strength and cognitive liberation, their shared *impetus* functions to augment their credibility, by suggesting that their estimations of the world around them are shared by others and, thus, are accurate.

These unacknowledged lineages in Kent's conceptualization of spiritual kinship encourage us to reflect on the category of "new religious movement." On one hand, it is clear that Jones saw similarities, and even camaraderie, between Peoples Temple and social movements that are commonly identified as new religions. Indeed, this article argues that Jones' doctrinal maneuvers fit into Kent's description of how new religions rhetorically behave. On the other hand, Jones claimed an affinity with these groups on the basis of their being "new" and "movements," *not* on the basis of shared "religious" beliefs. This observation is not simply a function of utilizing McAdam's politically-focused model. Jones was openly critical of the religious teachings of David Berg, L. Ron Hubbard, and Sun Myung Moon, and supported MOVE's anti-establishment behavior without any apparent knowledge of John Africa's teachings.<sup>55</sup>

Jones' increasing substitution of socialism for Christianity and his eventual avowal that "I am not religious! I hate religion!" certainly justifies deemphasizing the Temple's "religious" aspects (Q969). Jones' commentary on nonreligious illegitimate social movements such as the Black Panther Party, the Red Brigades, and the Baader-Meinhof Gang functionally mirror his references to new religions, and thus one could identify Peoples Temple as a political or social revolutionary movement.<sup>56</sup> When discussing Jonestown's future in 1978, however, Jones asserted that the community would not participate in "revolutionary violence like the Red Brigade[s]," citing the Brigades' "corruption" and "capitalistic greed"

(Q245). Jones' 1978 clarification that "we are not concerned about race. We're concerned about working class solidarity," likewise, hinders a purely racial classification of Peoples Temple (Q342). Each of these acts of rhetorical distancing complicates categorizing Peoples Temple, but none of them can serve as a definitive rejection of any particular label.<sup>57</sup>

Peoples Temple's diverse nature resists simple categorization as a religious, racial, or political movement. Its disparate spiritual kin—ranging from the black church and the social gospel to the Unification Church and Scientology—reflect its deliberately polyvalent lineage, which Jones cultivated in order to both draw in a number of different populations as well as draw on a variety of worldviews and strengths. By tracing the Temple's lineage back to a single broadly-reacted-to set of political opportunities, Jones rhetorically constructed an ideology that opened itself to a heterogeneous set of indigenous organizational strengths and cognitive liberations. Recognizing the kinship ties to nonreligious and illegitimate social movements that Jones promoted in Peoples Temple should encourage scholars of new religions to consider the intentionally multifaceted nature of the groups that they study. The difficulty of classifying new religions is as much a function of the complexity of establishing social legitimacy as it is a reflection of definitional divergence.

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Year and Location of Recording

Q162 (1976, Philadelphia)	Q952 (1974, San Francisco)
Q188 (1978, Jonestown)	Q953 (1974, Los Angeles)
Q194 (1978, Jonestown)	Q965 (1976, San Francisco)
Q197 (1978, Jonestown)	Q969 (1976, California)
Q245 (1978, Jonestown)	Q943 (1977, Jonestown)
Q253 (1978, Jonestown)	Q972 (1973, United States)
Q266 (1978, Jonestown)	Q974 (1973, San Francisco)
Q284 (1978, Jonestown)	Q977 (1977, Jonestown)
Q290 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1021-A (1972, Ukiah)
Q342 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1024 (1974, Redwood Valley)
Q352 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1028-A (1975, Los Angeles)
Q353 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1035 (1972, San Francisco)
Q414 (1978, Jonestown)	Q 1053-3 (1974, Los Angeles)
Q596-A (1978, Jonestown)	Q 1058-2 (195[7/8], Indianapolis)
Q733 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1058-4 ([195?, Indianapolis])
Q733 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1059-1 (1973, San Francisco)
Q738 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1059-3 (1972, California)
Q767 (1978, Jonestown)	Q1059-5 (1974, United States)
Q945 (197[7/8], Philadelphia)	

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For this last appearance, see Michael Meiers, *Was Jonestown a CIA Medical Experiment? A Review of the Evidence* (Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Eileen Barker, “Religious Movements: Cult and Anticult Since Jonestown,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 12 (1986): 330. See, for example, Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (1965; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2003). In editions of the text published after 1978, Peoples Temple appears as a prototype for new religions, as “the cultic psychological patterns evidenced in manic proportions at Jonestown are present to some degree in every cult” (Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 37). In editions of the text published before 1978, Peoples Temple does not appear at all.

<sup>3</sup> James Richardson’s article “People’s Temple and Jonestown: A Corrective Comparison and a Critique” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19, no. 3 (1980), exemplifies this method. See Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006), 83–85 for a summary of the most oft-used demographics. These demographics, while accurate during Peoples Temple’s existence, are no longer necessarily representative of demographic trends in new religions. See James R. Lewis, “Whatever Happened to Youthful Converts?” in *Sects & Stats: Overturning the Conventional Wisdom About Cult Members* (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the difficulty of selecting groups to represent “new religions” when trying to classify Peoples Temple, see Richardson, “People’s Temple and Jonestown,” 241. My selections here are bounded by available data and reflect popular classifications at the time of the Temple’s existence. Despite its origin as the American Christian Movement for Life, MOVE’s religious status is less certain than the other groups mentioned. There are, however, sources that portray the group as religiously motivated. For MOVE’s self-identification with religion, see statements from members in Hizkias Assefa and Paul Wahrhaftig, *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia: Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution* (1988; repr., Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 10, 16, John Anderson and Hilary Hevenor, *Burning Down the House: MOVE and the Tragedy of Philadelphia* (New York: W W Norton and Company, 1987), 7, and Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia vs. MOVE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 30. For media depictions of MOVE from 1978—Jones’s period of interest—that use language usually associated with religions, see, for example, “Pig War in Philadelphia: Rizzo Attempts to Block Africa Cult” (*New Times*, 4 March 1978), 20 or “The MOVE Surrender is Underway” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 May 1978), 6-A. Regarding MOVE’s rhetorical and doctrinal borrowing from the Kingdom of Yahweh, as well as MOVE’s initial religiously connoted name, see Anderson and Hevenor, *Burning Down the House*, 2, 4. Regarding the uncertainty of labeling MOVE a religious group, see Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 26, 40. I have not included Jones’ references to new religious movements that significantly predate Peoples Temple (including the Peace Mission, Christian Science, and New Thought). While examining his commentary in relation to these subjects would support my argument, doing so would also be redundant.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen A. Kent, "Spiritual Kinship and New Religions," *Religious Studies and Theology* 22, no. 1 (2003): 85–86.

<sup>6</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 40, 43, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method," in *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>8</sup> See Tim Murphy, *Representing Religion: Essays in History, Theory, and Crisis* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2007), 1–3.

<sup>9</sup> Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 74–86.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, "People's Temple and Jonestown," 243.

<sup>11</sup> Jamie Hubbard, "Embarrassing Superstition, Doctrine, and the Study of New Religious Movements," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no.1 (1998): 61.

<sup>12</sup> Hubbard, "Embarrassing Superstition," 61n4.

<sup>13</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 85–86.

<sup>14</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 85.

<sup>15</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 88.

<sup>16</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 88, 91, 93.

<sup>17</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 89.

<sup>18</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 92–93.

<sup>19</sup> See David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); John R. Hall, *Gone From the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (1987; repr., New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001); Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown*; and Rebecca Moore, *Understanding Jonestown and Peoples Temple* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Although Jones rarely mentions the social gospel explicitly, Q945, Q965, and Q1059-5 all identify religiously motivated pragmatic aid for those marginalized by society as the Temple's goal. Q162, Q945, Q972, and Q1035 situate Jones' critiques of the Bible and institutionalized religion in a lineage stemming back to figures such as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. Throughout this article, I identify Peoples Temple audiotapes by the letter-number designation given to them by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Date and location information, summaries, and transcriptions of the tapes cited in this article can be found on the Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple website, at [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=43](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=43), last modified 25 November 2013. All transcribed quotations in this article are my own.

<sup>21</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 88.

<sup>22</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 91.

<sup>23</sup> Q1059-5 refers to the "spirit and consciousness" of socialism in Christian terms. Q342, Q352, and Q596A identify the Soviet Union as the "spiritual motherland" of Peoples Temple.

<sup>24</sup> Kent, "Spiritual Kinship," 88.

<sup>25</sup> See Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (2nd ed., Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2014), 22–23.

<sup>26</sup> See Murphy, *Representing Religion*, 190fn23.

<sup>27</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 38, 42; Gary T. Marx and Doug McAdam, *Collective Behavior and Social Movements: Process and Structure* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 85. See also Doug McAdam, “‘Initiator’ and ‘Spin-off’ Movements: Diffusion Processes in Process Cycles,” in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 224.

<sup>28</sup> Doug McAdam, “Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>29</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 42; Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes—Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10–11.

<sup>30</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Marx and McAdam, *Collective Behavior*, 13–14, 95.

<sup>32</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 44–48.

<sup>33</sup> Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 16, 49; Doug McAdam, “Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward a More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, ed. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 291–92.

<sup>34</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> McAdam, “‘Initiator’ and ‘Spin-off’ Movements,” 227.

<sup>36</sup> McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>37</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Jones went to great lengths to establish the Temple’s own worldview as a means of recognizing political opportunities and drawing on indigenous organizational strengths. See Kristian Klippenstein, “Language Appropriation and Identity Construction in New Religious Movements: Peoples Temple as Test Case,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85, no. 2 (2017): 348–80. His interest in the cognitive constructions of new religions, by contrast, extended only so far as their opinions regarding socialism and organized religion.

<sup>39</sup> Jones called the Temple “socialist” more often than “communist.” Although in Q943 he identified socialism as an achievable transitional stage between his audience’s capitalist upbringing and true communism, more often his semantic choice of one term or the other lacked clear ideological justification. Ultimately, Jones waved off ideological labeling in favor of pragmatism, claiming that “I hear so many things about ‘I’m this kind of a socialist’ or ‘I’m a Maoist socialist’ or

'I'm a USSR socialist' or 'I'm a socialist worker' or 'I'm a people's socialist' or 'I'm a Trotskyite socialist'—I'm for anybody whose rights are being taken away from them" (Q969).

In Indianapolis Jones described communism as a threat to Christianity while explaining that the Temple operated on the principle of "from each according to his ability to each according to his need," a direct quote from Marx and a paraphrase of Acts 2:45 (Q1058-4). See Karl Marx, "Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party," in *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. and trans. Eugene Kamenka (1875; repr., Toronto: Penguin Books, 1983), 541. In another early recording, he described "what's going on behind that Iron Curtain" with admiration (Q1058-2).

<sup>40</sup> Jones' certainty of socialism's eventual triumph waned as his legal troubles multiplied in Guyana. In June 1978 Jones predicted that "in the long run, the fascist system will win" (Q194).

<sup>41</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 164.

<sup>42</sup> Noting the hypocrisy of requiring one's rank-and-file members to live in egalitarian fashion while living off of their income, Jones characterized the Children of God as "socialism for the peons, but fascism for the upper class" (Q952).

<sup>43</sup> See Robert P. Boettcher and Gordon L. Freedman, *Gifts of Deceit: Sun Myung Moon, Tongsun Park, and the Korean Scandal* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1980).

<sup>44</sup> North Korea, by contrast, "is, indeed, the government of the people—truly socialist, communist democracy" (Q733). See Moe Taylor, "One Hand Can't Clap: Guyana and North Korea, 1974–1985," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 17, no. 1 (2015): 54, for the links between Guyana, North Korea, and Jonestown.

<sup>45</sup> See Tim Reiterman and John Jacobs, *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People* (Toronto: Tarcher/Penguin, 2008 [1982]), 166, 171–72, for example.

<sup>46</sup> In a June 1978 recording, Jones claimed that "we now have thirty-three million dollars of lawsuits hanging over our heads" (Q188).

<sup>47</sup> See Hugh B. Urban, "Fair Game: Secrecy, Security, and the Church of Scientology in Cold War America," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, no. 2 (2006): 377–78.

<sup>48</sup> Paulette Cooper, *The Scandal of Scientology* (New York: Tower Publications, 1971). The news story in question appeared in the *Chronicle's* 1 May 1978 edition, evidently as an adapted reprint of a 29 April 1978 *Washington Post* piece. Jones' directly quoted statements beginning "her publisher was sued," "the church of Scientology sued her," and "when she [Cooper] went" are, in turn, direct and accurate quotations from the *Chronicle*. Jones's evaluations of litigation and tampering with library records are, of course, his own original thoughts. This article makes no assertions regarding the truth or falsity of the *Chronicle's* statements.

<sup>49</sup> See Assefa and Wahrhaftig, *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*, 20–27, 35–37.

<sup>50</sup> Jones signalled his unfamiliarity with MOVE by misunderstanding the duration of the group's standoff with Philadelphia police. While the article Jones read places the conflict's origin "last May" and "since May 11," Jones seemed to think that these dates referred to May 1978 (Q284 was recorded in late May

1978) rather than May 1977. As the story unfolded, Jones realized his mistake and interjected “oh my goodness, this [standoff] is since last May a year ago” (Q284).

<sup>51</sup> See Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> The Baader-Meinhoff Gang was also known as the Red Army Faction. See Stefan Aust, *Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the RAF*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> See Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 44–45; and Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 72–78.

<sup>54</sup> Jones struggled to maintain consistent language as the Temple ideologically transitioned from a religious organization with political teachings to a political organization with (ir)religious teachings. He lamented that “I can’t give it to you all, dissimulate it like I ought to, because if I do . . . speak on one level—sometimes others are on another level, it’s difficult to get a comprehension” (Q952).

<sup>55</sup> See Assefa and Wahrhaftig, *The MOVE Crisis*, 9–16 for a summary of MOVE’s doctrines and practices.

<sup>56</sup> Conversely, one could describe nonreligious movements using the terminology of new religions. One particularly appropriate example of this phenomenon is Alessandro Orsini’s *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mindset of Modern Terrorists* (2009; repr., trans. Sarah J. Nodes [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011]), which describes the Red Brigades as “a political movement operating with the typical words, thoughts, and dogmas of a religious sect” (Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades*, 6).

<sup>57</sup> See, again, Lincoln, “Theses on Method,” 3.