**8. New Religious Movements are inherently world denying. Referring to Wallis’ typologies discuss the above statement.**

**Shannon Mcmillan**

When considering Roy Wallis’ typologies cults, sects and movements are easily categorised into one of three: world denying, world affirming and world accommodating. This tripartite typology of new religious movements (NRM(s)) simplifies the understanding of these movements and allows a sense of relatability between the movement and those outside, with the relation to the common view and structure of the world. Wallis’ world denying typology requires movements to posses a charismatic leader, distance from friends and family, rejection of mainstream societal views and a tendency to anticipate the end of the world[[1]](#footnote-1).

Jim Jones with the People’s Temple in Guyana resembles Wallis’ typology of world denying, due to the Reverend’s charisma evident with the amount of support received during his leadership which continued resulting in 900 of his followers drinking the “Kool-Aid” in 1978. ‘The Jonestown Death Tape’ in which Jones describes himself as a ‘prophet’[[2]](#footnote-2), this religious imagery rejects mainstream Abrahamic idea of prophets and affirms Wallis’ world denying typology with the rejection of mainstream societal views. This charismatic leader and differing beliefs points towards this movement being only world denying, however ‘Many of the Temple techniques of monitoring, counselling, and social control were borrowed from the wider society.’, suggesting that the statement is false as this NRM had world affirming elements within their society, yet had strong foundations within world denying practices as Jones presented an ‘apocalyptic ideology… within strong social boundaries in cognitive isolation from society at large.’[[3]](#footnote-3) These elements of both world denying and world affirming contradict Wallis’ categorisation of NRMs, suggesting that Roy Wallis’ typologies may not be reliable due to Jones’ actions included those of a world denying and a world affirming cult.

In terms of the statement that NRMs are inherently world denying, Wallis’ typologies conclude that this statement is both correct and incorrect as some movements can have elements from more than one category. Yet, in terms of Reverend Jim Jones and the People’s Temple, have elements of world denying in order to maintain control over Jones’ people convincing them that they are protected within the isolated Guyana jungle and that Jones ‘practically died every day to give you peace.’[[4]](#footnote-4) The extent of Jones’ charismatic leadership is evident as one follower declares that ‘Man 2: We’re all ready to go. If you tell us we have to give our lives now, we’re ready. All the rest of the sisters and brothers are with me.’[[5]](#footnote-5) Which could suggest that NRMs such as the People’s Temple are inherently world denying at their core due to themes of the apocalyptic, death and sacrifice. One could argue that when using Wallis’ typologies of NRMs are inherently world denying due to their hierarchy and beliefs yet have the potential to have small elements of world affirming/accommodating. Alongside this feeling of family within these movements due to the separation of family and those within these movements, reflected in the Manson family and The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC/Moonies).

The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity and its extent of its world denying nature is explored in ex-member Steven Hassan’s book ‘Combatting Cult Mind Control’. The Moonie Movement focused on the importance of family with its founder and leader Reverend Sun Myung Moon referred to as their father, with Moon and his wife Hak Ja Han the ‘True Parents’ of their followers (the True Children) while completely removing the members family from the equation with destruction of communication. The Moonie Movement isolated their “children” from their families almost entirely and persuaded members such as Steve Hassan to donate ‘my bank account… I had to abandon my Chilean foster child’, extending and maintaining control over their “family” further isolating them, affirming Wallis’ world denying/rejecting typology of NRMs. Hassan describes the treatment of the members as he was told that his family were ‘trying to kidnap and deprogram me [and] was sent “underground” to Pennsylvania.’, instructed to not contact family and all mail was ‘forwarded through another city’. The removal and transport of members further affirms the element of differing ideals than the mainstream societal beliefs, as Hassan believed that ‘group members were brutally kidnapped, beaten, and tortured by deprogrammers,’ further isolating and controlling members in order to continue their ‘One World Crusade.’ With members of the Moonie Movement being ‘Heavenly Children’, and it was their duty to ‘claim money back from Satan to God’s Messiah, Sun Myung Moon,’ with the recruitment of members and their bank accounts to pay the Messiah, Moon. [[6]](#footnote-6)

This isolation resembles Jonestown in the Guyana jungle with limited to no communication with family or anyone outside of their congregation, as they were corrupt and wanted to remove them from Jones’ protection. Moon and Jones mirror each other with Christian imagery of being a ‘prophet’ and ‘Messiah’ who protects his children within the congregation in the name of God/Christianity against the evils of the world, isolating and using mind coercion reinforcing Wallis’ typology of world denying cults or sects. Hassan’s experience of dropping ‘out of school, donate my bank account, look at Moon as my true parent, and believe my parents were Satan.’ reaffirms the statement as the Moonie Movement’s most prominent features aligned with Roy Wallis’ world denying typology. [[7]](#footnote-7)

The HAS-UWC’s beliefs and practices differed from the mainstream, with Moonie spreading the belief that he was the true Messiah who wanted to protect his children against Satan’s helpers in the outside world. Isolating his congregation from the outside world, using psychological and mind coercion techniques in order to maintain control. All these elements align with Wallis’ typology of world denying cults, with the Moonies forming in the 1950s then the Unification Church in the late 1960s until the 1970s one could argue that most if not all New Religious Movements have elements of world denying and could be considered inherent to these types of movement as their belief system is a separation from established religious groups/wider society.

Many New Religious Movements have an element of world denying as the leaders of these groups create a space and hierarchy to recruit others via their charisma, in order to create and establish a belief system and sometimes forming a new societal structure. These two New Religious Movements support the statement as, Jim Jones and his apocalyptic view and Communist ideology which differed from the wider Western ideas which led to his loyal follower’s demise. Taking Hassan’s experience into account one can argue that it affirms the statement as the Moonie Movement isolated their members and physically, mentally, and financially controlled them while using mind coercion techniques to assure their loyalty to the Messiah and remain isolated from their family and friends.

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2. Rev, Jim Jones. *The Jonestown Death Tape (FBI No. Q 042).* 1978, <<https://archive.org/details/ptc1978-11-18.flac16>> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John R. Hall. ‘Cults and New Religious Movements’ (2008). Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 193, 202-203 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rev, Jim Jones. *The Jonestown Death Tape (FBI No. Q 042).* 1978, <<https://archive.org/details/ptc1978-11-18.flac16>> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Steven Hassan. Combatting Cult Mind Control: The #1 Best-Selling Guide to Protection, and Recovery From Destructive Cults (1990), Park Street Press, pp. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Steven Hassan in ‘I was a Moonie cult leader’. Interviewed by Emine Saner (03/09/2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)