

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES
MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER, DECEMBER 2015

TITLE OF PAPER : NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

COURSE CODE : TRS 113

TIME ALLOWED : TWO (2) HOURS

MARKS : 75

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. CHOOSE AND ANSWER ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS.**
- 2. EACH QUESTION CARRIES 25 MARKS.**
- 3. BEGIN EACH QUESTION ON A NEW PAGE.**
- 4. CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN FOR CLARITY, ACCURACY AND GOOD THEOLOGICAL INSIGHT.**

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

QUESTION ONE

Critically discuss the reasons why contemporary scholars prefer the term new religious movements to sects and cults when referring to newly established religious movements.

[25]

QUESTION TWO*A Case Study*

In the 1970s an ordained Methodist minister names Jim Jones (1931 – 78) moved his congregation (called the Peoples Temple) from the United States to the jungles of Guyana, where he attempted to create a utopian, interracial community based on his idea of 'apostolic socialism,' a version of Christianity that was influenced by contemporary Marxist liberation theory. Jones, an increasingly authoritative and paranoid personality, warned his followers that a devastating thermonuclear war was impending. In 1978, after a group of concerned family members (led by a U.S. congressman) visited the group's commune, Jones and his followers (913 persons in all) committed what Jones called 'revolutionary suicide' rather than submit to what they thought would be an attempt to compromise their community. 'Death is a million times preferable to 10 more days of this life,' Jones told his group, and, 'If you knew what was ahead of you, you'd be glad to be stepping over tonight.'

Drawing on your acquired knowledge on the characteristics of sects and cults, under which category would you classify the Peoples Temple and why?

[25]

QUESTION THREE

Choose any NRM in North America to demonstrate why the 1960's is explained by Withrow (1989) as the period of 'the big story'.

[25]

QUESTION FOUR

Drawing on your study on the interactions between African cultures and Christianity, provide evidence that in the African worldview there is a close relationship between God, humans and nature.

[25]

QUESTION FIVE

'New Religious Movements have provided women a chance to recover some of their traditional status and positions which had been undermined by the teachings of the mission churches' (Jules-Rosette, 1985).

Drawing on your personal observations within your context do you agree or disagree with the above assertion? Discuss.

[25]

QUESTION SIX

Considering the rapid growth of NRMs in Swaziland what do you think would be major challenges to this phenomenon in future?

[25]

THE END