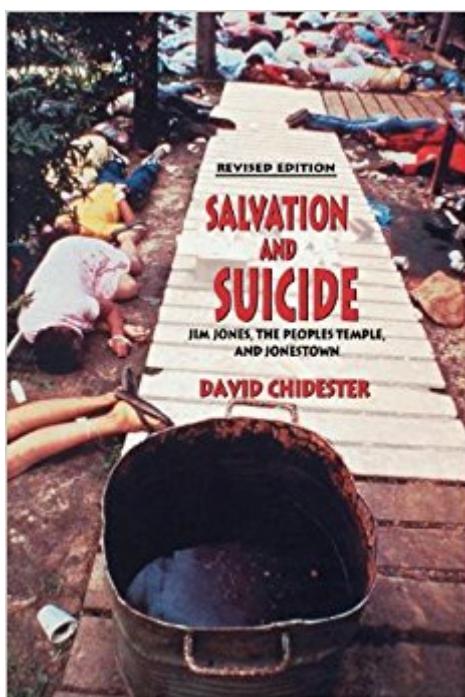


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# Salvation And Suicide: An Interpretation Of Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, And Jonestown (Religion In North America)



## Synopsis

Praise for the first edition: "[This] ambitious and courageous book [is a] benchmark of theology by which questions about the meaningful history of the Peoples Temple may be measured." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Re-issued in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the mass suicides at Jonestown, this revised edition of David Chidester's pathbreaking book features a new prologue that considers the meaning of the tragedy for a post-Waco, post-9/11 world. For Chidester, Jonestown recalls the American religious commitment to redemptive sacrifice, which for Jim Jones meant saving his followers from the evils of capitalist society. "Jonestown is ancient history," writes Chidester, but it does provide us with an opportunity "to reflect upon the strangeness of familiar... promises of redemption through sacrifice."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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David Chidester is Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town and author or editor of 20 books, including *American Sacred Space* (IUP, 1995), edited with Edward T. Linenthal, and

## Christianity: A Global History.

This book is not about true crime but about the religious outlook and theory regarding about revolutionary suicide, cults, and Jim Jones' religious teachings. It's not about the mass murder that occurred in Jonestown but about the author's research into the religious aspect of Jonestown. I wished the author had placed some pictures besides the one on the book. The horrible, tragic mass murder that occurred on November 18, 1978 was not the first white night which were mass suicide drills. This time, it was real for everybody. There was poison in their drinks and Jim Jones was not joking that this was it. But why did he think this way? Where did this theology come from in the first place? The book attempts to answer the questions about the event's religious impact. I read about revolutionary suicide which I did not know before. As the years pass, the Jonestown Holocaust slowly goes unnoticed except for the few documentaries and visits. Jonestown was not just about Jim Jones but about the socialism, communism, and collective lives there in Guyana which went horribly wrong. I encourage anybody interested in reading about Jonestown, the People's Temple, and Jim Jones beyond the criminal acts and the governments' failures in preventing this tragedy.

Great, wish it came a little sooner, but no one else had it. It met my expectations.

In a way, it is odd that the People's Agricultural Church (name of the "church") is treated as a religious "cult" at all, given the many overlaps with political players that have always been mentioned, and the fact that the leader was on record many times as denying God and saying it was a socialist "church without God." The wife ensured that the Jones assets would be sent to Soviet Union, with a signed will before she died at the scene. Rarely is the socialist aspect delved into, to a degree that would tie together these activities with political use of the cult--- such as in the Muscone election. Would suggest this, but maybe some of the other books, and the real live tapes of his sermons, so one can hear just how little it was any kind of church. Many did not seem to see it so, and the move to Guyana involved the socialist aspect (a communist country that would be friendly and with whom Jim Jones had relations with higher ups.) No one seems to have minded, and social security type payments went there for 65,000 dollars a month for the elderly people. It's a story that continues to fascinate and more to be written.

Some works on Jonestown are largely biographies of Jones himself, others follow the events leading up to the massacre. This one delves into the theology of the cult. This 'theology' is actually

political and philosophical nonsense of the worst kind. It would perhaps be easier to find a contact lens in a lake than any truth from the mouth of this madman or his leadership. We are presented with numerous examples throughout; paralyzed men told to walk in the name of socialism, frequent exhortations to members to evolve into perfect socialist beings. Jones even blames capitalism and the slave trade on the King James Bible from 1611! It is all enough to make the Soviets and Chinese blush. It's not surprising that after a few years of this, coupled with jungle comforts, many may have seen suicide as a form of salvation and deliverance. Theology and politics are clearly matters to understand when studying the Temple, but I found little justification for a 170 pages of coverage. After all the politics of any crazy organization, be it Nazism, Communism, or Al Queda is quite malleable and subject to change when convenient. What is fascinating and critically important is the behavior and actions, something notably absent from this publication.

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