



Cults and New Religions: A Brief History (Wiley Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion)

By Douglas E. Cowan, David G. Bromley

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This unparalleled introduction to cults and new religious movements has been completely up-dated and expanded to reflect the latest developments; each chapter reviews the origins, leaders, beliefs, rituals and practices of a NRM, highlighting the specific controversies surrounding each group.

- A fully updated, revised and expanded edition of an unparalleled introduction to cults and new religious movements
- Profiles a number of the most visible, significant, and controversial new religious movements, presenting each group's history, doctrines, rituals, leadership, and organization
- Offers a discussion of the major controversies in which new religious movements have been involved, using each profiled group to illustrate the nature of one of those controversies
- Covers debates including what constitutes an authentic religion, the validity of claims of brainwashing techniques, the implications of experimentation with unconventional sexual practices, and the deeply rooted cultural fears that cults engender
- New sections include methods of studying new religions in each chapter as well as presentations on 'groups to watch'

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Editorial Review

Review

The world of new religions is notoriously complex and diverse. As such, an introductory text must simplify, but without simplification. This updated edition of *Cults and New Religious Movements* achieves this admirably. With an enviable grasp of contemporary scholarship, Douglas Cowan and David Bromley provide fresh insights into particular groups, events and controversies. This wonderfully erudite and lucid volume should be required reading for all students of new religions.

Christopher Partridge, Lancaster University

An ideal source for those looking for a concise, authoritative introduction to the most important new religions of the past fifty years. The authors carefully and seriously tackle significant questions about the nature of new religions, helping readers navigate a controversial and complicated field.

Benjamin E. Zeller, Lake Forest College

The second edition of *Cults and New Religious Movements* is an astute and accessible textbook written by two eminent scholars of new religions. Through eight case studies the text examines key issues that arise in relation to new religious movements, thereby shedding light on the study of religions in general. This book is a valuable pedagogical tool that stimulates critical analysis and discussion in the classroom and beyond.

Catherine Wessinger, Loyola University New Orleans

From the Back Cover

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Cults and New Religions, 2nd edition, provides a concise and lively history of cults, dealing directly with the

conflicts that have marked the rise of controversial new religious movements since the middle of the twentieth century, and using these conflicts to explore the deeper meanings of new, emergent religions.

Each chapter has been completely updated to reflect the very latest developments within each movement, and includes a discussion of one of the major sources of controversy surrounding these groups, controversies that have led to them being popularly regarded as “cults.” Behind these stereotypes, however, Cowan and Bromley discuss in detail the history, central beliefs, and ritual practices of these groups, illustrating not only the range and diversity of new religions, and their rich and varied histories, but what they can teach us about religion more generally.

New to this edition is information on the emergence of important new religious groups as well as substantial new sections on researching new religious movements, the latest scholarly material in the field, and the importance of these groups in society. The result is a fascinating and informative volume suitable for students studying this area for the first time.

About the Author

Douglas E. Cowan is Professor of Religious Studies and Social Development Studies at Renison University College, at the University of Waterloo. He is the author of *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Brief History*, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (2005), *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (2003) *Sacred Terror: Religion and Horror on the Silver Screen* (2008) and *Sacred Space: The Quest for Transcendence in Science Fiction Film and Television* (2010).

David G. Bromley is Director of the World Religions and Spirituality Project and Professor of Religious Studies and Sociology in the School of World Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. His most recent publications include *Defining Religion: Critical Approaches to Drawing Boundaries Between Sacred and Secular* (2003) and *Cults, Religion and Violence* (2001).

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