



# The New Religious Movements Experience in America (The American Religious Experience)

*Eugene V. Gallagher*

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Wherever and whenever they appear, new religious movements always produce conflict. Even as they attract members who enthusiastically embrace their innovative teachings, new religions often provoke strongly negative reactions—often because they challenge established notions of proper religious action, belief, and morality. Opponents of new religious movements often brand them as cults and urge their fellow citizens, their own religions, and even the government to take action against what they see as suspicious and potentially dangerous movements; the members often complain that their motives have been misconstrued and argue that their groups are unfairly persecuted. *The New Religious Movements Experience in America* outlines the conflict between representatives of the status quo and new religions and examines how these groups appear both to their members and to their cultural opponents.

This work is ideal for anyone—students, parents, and teachers—who wish to gain a deeper understanding of new religious movements in America. New religions have always been part of the American religious landscape, and this book moves beyond the contemporary period to discuss examples of new religions that have originated, survived or died, and sometimes prospered throughout U. S. history. Among the groups discussed are the Mormons, the Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Church Universal and Triumphant, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Soka Gakkai, the Nation of Islam, Wiccans and neo-Pagans, the Church of Satan, the Church of Scientology, Heaven's Gate, and the Raelians. *The New Religious Movements Experience in America* includes a glossary and a list of resources for those interested in doing further research on the experience of the followers of new religions.

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