

Cults and New Religious Movements

An Annotated Bibliography

Robert M. Bowman, Jr.

NOTE: This bibliography lists only general works on the subject of cults and new religious movements. Separate bibliographies are available on specific religious groups as well as specific topics of relevance. The purpose of this bibliography is to provide researchers with a reasonably good overview of the most important or influential literature regardless of perspective. Thus, I list books here that I not only do not endorse but with which I strongly disagree.

A. Evangelical Introductions to the Study of Cults and NRMs

Abanes, Richard. *Defending the Faith: A Beginner's Guide to Cults and New Religions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. Theological basics concerning cults, the Trinity, salvation by grace, and eschatology.

Bowman, Robert M., Jr. *Orthodoxy and Heresy: A Biblical Guide to Doctrinal Discernment*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. Explains simply, for those with no theological background, the importance of discerning orthodox from heretical teaching and sets forth a broad evangelical approach to doing so.

Gomes, Alan W. *Unmasking the Cults*. Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements [ZGCRM]. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. Careful discussion of the definition and meaning of a cult.

Hexham, Irving, Stephen Rost, and John W. Morehead III, eds. *Encountering New Religious Movements: A Holistic Evangelical Approach*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004. Evangelicals dissatisfied with conventional "countercult" approaches to NRMs argue for a more contextual, missional approach to engaging members of such groups.

Johnson, Philip. "[Apologetics, Mission & New Religious Movements](#): A Holistic Approach." *Sacred Tribes Journal* 1, 1 (2008): 5-220. A book-length review and critique of six evangelical models or approaches to responding to new religious movements (or cults). I do not agree with some of what Johnson says, but this article will provide an in-depth introduction to the issues and controversies in countercult or discernment ministry. Recommended for those with some advance knowledge of the subject area.

B. Evangelical Surveys of Cults and NRMs

Enroth, Ron, ed. *A Guide to New Religious Movements*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005. Brief, up-to-date chapters on JWs, Mormons, Unification Church, Hinduism, the New Age movement, the Dalai Lama, Neopaganism, Baha'i, and the Nation of Islam.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963. Although dated

- and limited in the number of groups examined, Hoekema's book remains one of the most biblically and theologically astute textbooks on heretical Christian sects.
- House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. Includes LDS, JWs, Unification, United Pentecostal Church, The Way International, *A Course in Miracles*, Freemasonry, Mind Sciences, New Age, and eleven other groups.
- Johnston, Jerry. *Similarities and Differences of Non-Christian Belief Systems*. Overland Park, KS: Jerry Johnston Publishing, 2007. Megachurch pastor provides information and analysis of heretical Christian sects, world religions, and other movements.
- Martin, Walter. *Kingdom of the Cults*. 5th rev. ed. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985. The last edition of this book produced while the author was still living. The classic evangelical textbook offering a polemical critique of the doctrines of various cults.
- _____. *Kingdom of the Cults*. 6th rev. ed. Hank Hanegraaff, gen. ed. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997. In some ways usefully updated, yet heavy-handed posthumous edition, with new material by Gretchen Passantino and Richard Abanes (some of which contradicts the older material without any acknowledgment that this is the case).
- _____. *Kingdom of the Cults*. (7th) rev. ed. Ravi Zacharias, gen. ed. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003. Updated edition that removes much of the new material from the 1997 edition while making new additions and revisions. Kevin Rische and Jill Martin Rische (Martin's eldest daughter) were the managing editors.
- Rhodes, Ron. *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions: The Essential Guide to Their History, Their Doctrine, and Our Response*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. One of the more up-to-date and wide-ranging introductory textbooks.
- Tucker, Ruth A. *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan—Academie, 1989. Evangelical historian's textbook is strongest on historical exposition of the origins and people involved in each religion.

C. Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

- Ankerberg, John, and John Weldon. *The Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999. Massive apologetics-oriented reference work.
- Clark, Peter B., ed. *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 700-page secular academic reference work.
- Hexham, Irving. *Pocket Dictionary of New Religious Movements*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Useful descriptions of religious leaders, groups, practices, symbols, and texts.
- Lewis, James R. *The Encyclopedia of Cults, Sects, and New Religions*. 2nd ed. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998, 2002. Secular reference work covering a large number of religious groups from the best known to the relatively obscure. The second edition runs nearly 900 pages (almost 300 pages longer than the first).
- Mather, George A., and Larry Nichols. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Cults, Sects, and World Religions*. Alvin J. Schmidt, consulting ed. Rev. and updated ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. Originally published in 1993. Reference work produced by conservative Lutheran scholars.

Walker, James K., with the staff of Watchman Fellowship. *The Concise Guide to Today's Religions and Spirituality*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2007. Short definitions or descriptions for some 1600 entries of groups, authors, practices, doctrines, etc.

D. Collections of Primary Sources

Daschke, Dereck, and W. Michael Ashcraft, ed. *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Primary source documents from Mary Baker Eddy, Theosophists, Wiccans, the Unification Church, the Family/COG, Santería, Rastafarians, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X (Nation of Islam), Jim Jones, William Miller and Ellen G. White, Charles Taze Russell, and others.

E. Academic Study of NRMs

NOTE: All of the authors cited here are to varying degrees highly critical of the evangelical “countercult” or “anti-cult” movement. Some of their criticisms have merit with regard to some representatives of that movement. Other criticisms presuppose the author’s rejection of an evangelical understanding of the Christian faith (this does not apply to Hexham).

Barker, Eileen. *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*. London: HMSO [Her Majesty’s Stationery Office], 1989. London School of Economics sociologist of religion, best known for her work on the Unification Church, argues for a middle way between viewing NRMs as all harmless and as all dangerous.

Cowan, Douglas E. *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003. New religions scholar argues that the Christian countercult movement distorts the facts about the beliefs and practices of the religions it opposes.

_____, and David G. Bromley. *Cults and New Religions: A Brief History*. Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008. Examines Scientology, TM, Ramtha, the Unification Church, the COG/Family, the Branch Davidians, Heaven’s Gate, and Wicca.

Dawson, Lorne L. *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. New York: Oxford, 1998. Sociological approach to NRMs seeking (overtly) to refute “anti-cult” views of new religions, especially those that view cults as engaging in mind control.

_____, ed. *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*. Blackwell Readings in Religion. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Essays by leading academics in the field (Eileen Barker, James A. Beckford, Rodney Stark, Philip Jenkins, Margaret Thaler Singer, et. al.) on NRMs and conversion, mind control, violence, gender, and other subjects.

Hexham, Irving, and Karla Poewe. *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred*. Explorations: Contemporary Perspectives on Religion. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. Opens with withering criticism of the countercult movement (especially Walter Martin), then argues that new religions are “global movements that energize their followers with a new vision of the world” (167).

Lewis, James R., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*. New York: Oxford, 2004. Introductory essays by leading academics (J. Gordon Melton, Douglas E. Cowan, David G. Bromley, Anson Shupe, Massimo Introvigne, Philip Jenkins, et. al.).

F. Historical Surveys of Alternative Religions

- Herrick, James A. *The Making of the New Spirituality: The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003. Evangelical scholar explains how Kabbalah, John Shelby Spong, *The Bible Code*, Ayn Rand, Carl Sagan, science fiction, Joseph Smith, UFO abductions, and Joseph Campbell (among many other topics) are part of the story of Christianity's decline in the West and the emergence of a new religious synthesis.
- Jenkins, Philip. *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Religious historian reviews the history of controversial sects and cults, and what he regards as largely shrill anticult responses from conservative Christians.
- Kyle, Richard. *The Religious Fringe: A History of Alternative Religions in America*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. Putting the cults, sects, and controversial religious movements in America into historical context, from the Shakers and Mormons to Scientology and UFO cults.
- Lattin, Don. *The Harvard Psychedelic Club: How Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, Huston Smith, and Andrew Weil Killed the Fifties and Ushered in a New Age for America*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010. The nexus from which Americans were taught to drop out, live in the moment, revere the Dalai Lama, and pursue holistic health, turns out to have been Harvard liberals experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs in the 1960s. Far out!
- Meyer, Donald E. *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. Chronicles the history of positive thinking in American religion.

G. Biblical Hermeneutics and Alternative Religions

- Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. Assumes some background in New Testament studies and Greek, but extremely valuable.
- Geisler, Norman L., and Ron Rhodes. *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. Compendium of answers geared to those with little or no background in biblical studies. The 2005 paperback edition (otherwise unchanged) is called *Correcting the Cults: Expert Responses to Their Scripture Twisting*.
- Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980. Guide to discerning misinterpretations of Scripture.

H. Evangelizing and Counseling Members and Ex-Members

- Hutchinson, Janis. *Out of the Cults and into the Church: Understanding and Encouraging Ex-Cultists*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994. Former Mormon provides guidance for those counseling and ministering to cultists and ex-cultists in transition.
- Scott, Latayne C. *Why We Left a Cult: Six People Tell Their Stories*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993. Features stories of conversions from cultic religions to evangelical Christian faith,

including David Reed and Joan Cetnar (ex-JWs), Carolyn Poole and Elaine Dallas (ex-Christian Science), Irene Guthrie (ex-witchcraft), and Will Baron (ex-New Age). Note that Baron converted to the SDA Church.

I. Mind Control Model of Cults

Hassan, Steven. *Combatting Cult Mind Control*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1988. Former “Moonie” discusses exit-counseling, drawing on Lifton’s eight criteria of mind control.

Lifton, Robert Jay. *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of “Brainwashing” in China*. New York: Norton, 1961; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989. Book that has heavily influenced “mind control” analyses of cultism.

Singer, Margaret Thaler, with Janja Lalich. *Cults in Our Midst: The Hidden Menace in Our Everyday Lives*. Foreword by Robert Jay Lifton. Jossey-Bass, 1996.