A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS|

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Chapter One: Introduction

Douglas Cowan was a young minister in the United Church of Canada. His first parish assignment was to a couple of little towns in southern Alberta, Cardston and Magrath, located in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies. Cowan did not know much about this area, except that many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), or Mormons, lived there. Cardston was the northern limit of Mormon expansion in the 1880s. The first Mormon temple in Canada was built there. When Cowan phoned a denominational official to ask about Cardston's Mormons, that individual simply said "there are some Mormons there." In fact, 4000 of the 5000 residents of Cardston were Mormons! Cowan said, "it's the only place I've ever lived where people identify themselves negatively first: 'Hi, I'm Bob, I'm not Mormon'."[1]

Cowan knew nothing about Mormonism, so he went to a Christian bookstore and bought a copy of *The God Makers* (1984).[2] The authors, Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, claimed that they were unveiling Mormonism's secrets. As Cowan recalled,

> "I take it [*The God Makers*] home and I'm in my mother's kitchen and I'm reading it that afternoon and it's filled with just the most outlandish things ... I don't know whether to believe it or not, but I looked up, my Mom says, you know, 'honey what's wrong?' I said,

> Mom, 'they're sending me to Mars.' But of course I get there and [the Mormons] are just like everybody else… they raise their kids, they farm their crops, they crash their cars."[3]

During Cowan's time in Cardston and Magrath, the locals who were part of the LDS church became his neighbors and friends. When one of his Cardston parishioners died, the Mormon ward (local church) offered their worship space for the funeral, the biggest space of its kind in town. This parishioner had been popular. A lot of people attended the funeral and the ward's space was needed, and appreciated. The Mormons never asked for anything in return. According to Cowan, "it was just sheer graciousness on their part."[4]

Cowan recognized "cognitive dissonance between what I had read and what I experienced."[5] The Mormons described in Decker and Hunt's book were not at all like the Mormons whom Cowan knew. Later, Cowan entered a doctoral program in religious studies at the University of Calgary, studying under Irving Hexham (b. 1943), who had been researching new religions for years. Cowan's dissertation was on the countercult, the Protestant Evangelical movement opposed to cults or new religions (see Chapter Two). His dissertation later became a landmark study of the countercult, and Cowan spent many fruitful years as a scholar of NRM studies.[6]

Cowan's story summarizes many of this book's themes. Like other scholars, his first encounters with members of New Religious Movements (NRMs) were benign, in contrast to popular perceptions of such groups. Not all NRMs are harmless. Some may go through phases when violence and abuse are more likely than at other moments in the group's history. But most NRMs, most of the time, and in most places, function as do religions with greater social sanction: they provide explanations for life's meaning and communities in which members can find fulfillment. Also like other scholars in this book, Cowan sought answers to his questions

about NRMs through scholarship. Not satisfied with the skewed perceptions of Mormonism in *The God Makers*, Cowan branched out, reading in sociology and eventually turning his critical gaze on the likes of Decker and Hunt themselves. Although the countercult is not the largest area of research in NRM studies, it is an important one. The countercult highlights the symbiotic relationship between cults (another name for NRMs) and those opposed to them. Countercultists find purpose in their careers as opponents of religions they believe are harmful and sinful. Their secular counterparts in the anticult movement (the subject of Chapter Five) also find a purpose in opposing cults. And scholarship has played a crucial role in the unfolding of this drama.

Defining terms

The word "cult" is from the Latin "cultus" for worship, the verb form meaning to cultivate, attend to, or respect.[7] Cicero used the expression "cultus deorum" meaning "the honoring of the gods."[8] In the study of ancient Israel, cultus referred to rituals associated with the First, or Solomonic, Temple (ca. 10th century BCE), and later with the Second Temple in Jesus's day.[9] The term cult carries no negative connotations when used in this scholarly fashion. It simply points to ritual activity linked to special times and places. But modern American usage of the word cult is generally pejorative.[10] No consensus exists among NRM scholars about how, when, or why this shift occurred. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists some references to cults dating back to the 1600s that sound negative to modern ears: "You..referre it to the cult that you so foolishly talked of", "God, abolishing the cult of Gentile idols."[11] Interpreting seventeenth-century prose is a tricky proposition, but it seems apparent that the term, even when referring to a ritual system, could be used to judge the moral or spiritual worth of someone's ritual activity. Perhaps the emphasis on interior experience also played a role here. In ancient Greece, as well

as in other major cultures in Western history, ritual activity was criticized by some who claimed to apprehend divinity directly. They used meditation, prayer, or some other technique that required no ritual objects, settings, or time periods, but merely the clearing and focusing of one's consciousness. However, even this mystical approach to religious life has been called a cult in one of the most well-known texts in the history of American sociology. So the search goes on.[12]

Whatever the origins of the negative use of cult, by the nineteenth century in the United States, the term was commonly applied to any religious group that mainstream culture found objectionable (e.g. the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses). Philip Jenkins interpreted reaction to suspect religious groups in American history as periodic. Newer movements, many of which eventually became established religions in their own right, invariably evoked strong responses from the public, no matter the era. As Jenkins noted, ""cult" has acquired over the last century or so such horrible connotations that it can scarcely be used as an objective social scientific description."[13]

The phrase "New Religious Movement" or NRM has become the term of art for what was earlier called a cult. The origin of this term is uncertain. J. Gordon Melton argued that it was derived from a phrase that Japanese scholars used in the 1960s to identify religious groups then making their mark on Japanese society. Some were older groups, previously suppressed, while others were literally new.[14] Another theory was that the term NRM came from Harold Turner (1911-2002), who opened the Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements at the University of Lancaster in Great Britain. Turner was a scholar of African Initiated Churches, new movements in sub-Saharan Africa that combined indigenous and Western religious elements.[15] Also around this time Jacob Needleman (b. 1934), a philosopher at San Francisco

State University, published *The New Religions* (1970). Needleman employed the phrase "new religions" for Asian religions that were part of the 1960s counterculture in the United States.[16]

Today the designation NRM has multiple meanings as used by scholars of NRMs. The subtitle of the premiere journal in the field of NRM studies, *Nova Religio*, attempts to capture some of the breadth and diversity of NRMs: *The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions.* This subtitle first claims that some religions are not the same as more conventional religions. They are *alternatives,* other ways of seeking the divine. Typically such alternative groups encounter resistance from the majority religious culture. The status of being alternative can bring costs that some members are not willing to pay. Not surprisingly, alternative religious groups rarely last very long. The subtitle also implies that NRMs can refer to religions that are very new – *emergent*. This implies that religions have life cycles. Emergent religions are those at the beginning of their cycles. It says nothing about how long they may last, simply that they have arrived recently.

The very wording of the phrase NRM presents difficulties. Some groups are not new anymore. They arose decades, even centuries ago, and for whatever reasons survived. The term NRM also runs into problems in identifying certain groups as religious. Some of them claim that they are not religions at all. They argue that religion is humanity's effort to reach God, while their group has found God, or whatever they call the divine. Finally, some groups commonly called NRMs are not movements. Movements are fluid social groupings. Many NRMs are stable organizations that ceased to be fluid long ago.[17]

Scholars continue to use the term NRM because nothing better has been found. Many other phrases have been used – minority religions, the new religious consciousness, marginal religions, heterodox religions, non-traditional religions – but none have achieved widespread

usage like ‘NRM’ has. Perhaps the term NRM is also retained, despite its problems, because it carries with it the history of the field of NRM studies. This field began in the 1970s, when the movements under study were literally new to American society. As this book will show, from the 1970s onward the field coalesced and grew, producing thousands of peer-reviewed articles and books, generating numerous professional conferences, and providing many opportunities for scholars to explain complex religious phenomena to the public when NRM-related scandals or crises dominated the news. Scholars in NRM studies value pluralism, interdisciplinarity, First Amendment rights, and best practices in scholarship.

This book focuses primarily on events and trends in American history and culture, but the study of NRMs also occurred in other countries, especially Great Britain, British Commonwealth nations, France and other continental European countries, and Japan. In particular, the parallels between the American social context and that of Great Britain, Canada and Australia are significant, and Anglophone scholars have cooperated with one another in the study of NRMs for many years.

I interviewed over one hundred people for this book. Most of the interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2009, but I interviewed a few others as late as 2015. Interview subjects ranged in age from young adulthood to elderhood. For some, the study of NRMs was their career, while others had only marginal contact with NRM studies. Several were members of NRMs as well as scholars. Some were in Cultic studies (see below). A few were not scholars, but professionals (librarian, attorney) whose careers intersected with NRM studies in some significant way. The interviews deeply affected my outlook on NRM studies. Each interview contained one or more stories with mundane details about daily life and seemingly unimportant decisions that often led to remarkable academic achievements. The study of NRMs was built

upon this human foundation. All NRM studies scholars eat, sleep, have relationships that are important to them, hope for the best but sometimes suffer the worst, nurture egos and do selfless things for others. Standing behind this phalanx of scholars are countless spouses, children, siblings, friends and enemies. I have tried to sprinkle their stories throughout this book. They give vitality to the narrative.

I also relied on these interviews to guide my research. I conducted most of the interviews before I began a program of systematic reading through the scholarship. The interview subjects collectively gave me a sketch of how the field of NRM studies developed. By checking their perceptions of historic events with my reading of books and articles, I could more accurately collate the published material with human action.

Scholars, NRM Studies, and Cultic Studies

The word 'scholar' is derived from the Greek and refers to a place of discussion and learning. Our English word 'school' also comes from this root. A scholar, then, is someone who devotes some or all of their time and efforts toward the advancement of knowledge. Scholarship is the product, or result, of the scholar's mental labor. That labor is not conducted haphazardly. It is governed by rules agreed upon by communities of scholars. This all sounds quite neat and tidy, but it is not. As Randall Collins (b. 1941) noted in the first line of his magisterial *The Sociology of Philosophies,* "Intellectual life is first of all conflict and disagreement."[18] Collins was concerned with philosophers in the histories of various civilizations, but he laid out a theory for the production of knowledge that provides a helpful way to contemplate how scholars function. He argued for "interactional rituals," a phrase coined by sociologist Erving Goffman

(1922-1982), who noted that the sacred rituals arising from human society were "the same type of event which happens ubiquitously in everyday life."[19] Collins said that any interaction ritual must have the following components: two or more people in physical contact, all focused on the same object and all aware that they are doing so as a group, and a common mood or emotion.[20] Many communication devices would be at play in these interactions: speech, body language, eye contact, and gestures. Participants in such interaction rituals "feel they are members of a group, with moral obligations to one another." They experience feelings whose intensity is congruent with the level of membership they have in the group. "All social life is an ecology of human bodies, coming together and moving apart across the landscape," said Collins.[21]

Groups of scholars have this same basic set of social ingredients shared by other human groupings. Communities have symbols that indicate the nature of their group, recognizable to both themselves and to outsiders. All members share a focus that is important to them. What makes interaction rituals unique among scholars is that, when they come together, they do so to conduct activities related to ideas, those abstract symbols that are deeply meaningful to them. These activities may include "The discussion, the lecture, the argument, sometimes the demonstration or the examination of evidence: these are the concrete activities from which the sacred object "truth" arises." Although we live in an age when the written word is the greatest means of communication, and scholars give and receive ideas via writing, especially published writing, Collins argued that "face-to-face structures…are the most constant across the entire history of intellectual life." This is because interaction rituals can only occur at this level of personal encounter. If they are not face-to-face, they will not be charged with emotional energy, and without that energy, interaction subsides and dies.[22]

Major social institutions, said Collins, are built upon numerous interaction rituals. As interaction rituals proliferate, they create chains. These are "their own histories of ritual participation." Any individual's action will depend, at any given moment, on where they are in a chain of interaction rituals, the repository of symbols they carry with them, and their emotional investment in the ritual or chain of rituals. The chain is both an external structure – literally many people in many locales who find commonality among themselves – and an inner structure – a set of ideas that one possesses, ideas that help to determine their status, identity, and emotional life.[23]

Collins's description emphasized the "web of shifting group affiliations" among scholars, in contrast to earlier sociological theories. Marxists said that scholars identified first and foremost by their social class. Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), on the other hand, said that scholars were classless, their identities based on similar educational experiences and cultural expectations. Both sets of theories have problems. If you define scholars by class, you miss the varying political and social affiliations that scholars possess. If you define scholars as classless, you "minimize the significance of social influences on the shaping of ideas." Collins moved the center of action, then, to the basic social level of the small group.[24]

There are two problems with Collins's argument, raised by Michele Lamont in his review of Collins's book. Collins posited a view of the self that was wooden, inflexible. For Collins, scholars acted to maximize their "acquired cultural capital and symbolic resources." As Lamont noted, if Collins was right then "we would all spend our time at professional meetings trying to get closer to luminaries instead of, say, hanging out with old friends."[25] But scholars, indeed people generally, are more diverse than Collins would have us believe. As Gregory J. Feist argued in compiling a list of traits of creative scientists, scholars differed from one another based

on many variables: "openness to experience and flexibility of thought…drive, ambition, and achievement…dominance, arrogance, hostility, and self-confidence…autonomy, introversion, and independence."[26]

Lamont's second criticism is linked to Collins's heavy emphasis on face-to-face encounters. For Collins, personal interaction led to construction of a virtual network. But what about the intellectual breakthroughs of loners, who may not exist very comfortably in a network? Collins allowed for them, but saw them as exceptions to the rule. And yet they are persistent actors in the creation of scholarship. And what about those who position themselves at the center of scholarly communities, but rarely produce scholarship? If Collins was correct, they would be outpacing all others in production of journal articles, books, paper presentations, and invited lectures. But that is not always true.[27]

Based on Lamont's critique of the importance of face-to-face encounters, I would further argue that scholars engage with the printed word, often without ever meeting the writers of those words. An article, essay, or book, in effect becomes another intellectual entity with which the scholarly reader interacts. Here, face-to-face translates as face-to-text. It has earmarks of a personal encounter, but is not literally an encounter in which two human beings are in proximity to one another.

Therefore, in this book I rely on Collins's characterization of scholars as human beings seeking common affiliation, across class lines, and yet influenced by their socially bounded status. In the interviews that I conducted, I discovered that what was most important to them was not their social class, nor their sense of being part of some social stratum that defied class. Rather, they talked about the people with whom they had had significant face-to-face encounters. But they also talked just as much about what they read, and how that influenced them. And they

were not all attempting to maximize their benefits. Some of them thought and behaved in ways that maximized some abstract sense of scholarship, or maximized benefits for colleagues, even scholars with whom they disagreed. J. Gordon Melton, for instance, came up in nearly every interview that I conducted. He has helped an untold number of scholars to find research topics and the means to pursue them. Collins might argue that Melton did so to construct a network of scholars, and perhaps that was part of his motivation, but Melton, like all of us, has multiple motivations. He was also interested in furthering understanding of NRMs, and that could only happen if more people studied NRMs. And no doubt there was a certain altruism at play here as well, something mentioned quite often by the subjects whom I interviewed. In encouraging scholars to look into understudied topics, Melton received no short-term benefit, and perhaps no long-term benefit either. Not all of his suggestions were acted upon. And sometimes, no doubt, what he thought was a promising avenue for research was really a dead end. It's how things work in scholarship. Melton always seemed content for some studies to bear fruit, while others did not.

NRM studies is a *field*, but its place within the world of scholarship requires some explanation. Major areas of academic investigation are called *disciplines.* The disciplines in the social sciences include psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and anthropology; in the physical sciences - biology, chemistry, and physics; and in the humanities - history, philosophy, literary study, art, and music. Each discipline is "a branch of instruction for the transmission of knowledge." Disciplines not only draw boundaries separating types of inquiry, but colleges and universities draw internal boundaries using disciplines. The latter are the basis for departments, teaching assignments, research centers, and allocation of financial resources.[28] Within disciplines are *specializations*. "In the natural sciences, specialization is celebrated as a

mark of competence." The same could be said of the social sciences and humanities. Scholars are located not only within a discipline, but in a specialization. The latter indicates that scholars are doing what they're supposed to: analyzing (breaking into parts), synthesizing (putting the parts back together) and interpreting (explaining how the parts and the whole go together). Without specialization, there would be no progress in learning about the world. But it also means that scholars often talk across barriers imposed by specialization, and that kind of dialogue can be difficult as well as counterproductive, unless participants are willing to take great care and be persistent.[29]

Neither disciplines nor specializations remain static. They are constantly changing, as new information and new insights compel scholars to re-think and re-articulate knowledge. In the social sciences, specializations are especially important. They indicate that cross-fertilization is occurring among scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds. A good example is social psychology, a hybrid of psychology and sociology. The existence of such specializations indicates that two processes are happening: fragmentation and recombination. Both are necessary. Social psychology resulted from the breaking off of pieces of two pre-existing disciplines, in the form of theoretical insights, empirical methods, and discovery of new phenomena. But social psychology has also recombined. It now has its own literature, professional societies, and frames of reference.[30]

The field of NRM studies is a specialization. It constantly breaks apart and recombines elements of disciplines to form its own structure. Its origins are rooted first and foremost in the sociology of religion, itself a major specialization within sociology, and secondarily in religious studies, a combination of two disciplinary families: the humanities and the social sciences. Like the sociology of religion, the field of NRM studies has as its object of study the social formations

and processes that can be measured and evaluated scientifically. Like religious studies, the field of NRM studies approaches all religious phenomena as instances of the same general principles regarding religious behavior, community, and belief.

The field of NRM studies contends with another field, called Cultic studies. Individuals who identify themselves with this area prefer to call NRMs "cults" because the word connotes a type of social grouping that harms members and outsiders. They find the label NRM restricting, since it refers only to religious groups, while cults, they insist, may be religious or secular. Scholars in NRM studies, on the other hand, while not denying that some NRMs cause harm, tend to look at NRMs as religious groups in evolution, considering multiple questions regarding NRMs beyond a singular focus on harm. Prominent names in Cultic studies include John Clark, Richard Delgado, Arthur Dole, Linda Dubrow-Marshall, Steve K. D. Eichel Ron Enroth, Lorna Goldberg, William Goldberg, David Halperin, Stephen Kent, Janja Lalich, Michael Langone, Richard Ofshe, Marcia Rudin, Alan Scheflin, Lita Linzer Schwartz, Daniel Shaw, Margaret Thaler Singer, Dennis Tourish, Louis Jolyon West, and Doni Whittsett.

I work in the field of NRM studies. However, in this book I attempt to give Cultic studies a fair hearing. I believe that Cultic studies scholars highlighted important aspects of cultic phenomena that were either neglected or given inadequate attention by those in NRM studies. Had Cultic studies scholars shed their identification with anticult movement advocates, scholars in NRM studies might have listened to them more closely. Conversely, if scholars in NRM studies had looked at Cultic studies with new eyes, rather than sailing so closely to the shores of their own disciplines' assumptions, they might have benefitted from interaction with Cultic studies. Both sides bear responsibility for the distance now separating them.

That being said, Cultic studies is not mainstream scholarship. It is largely a project shared by a small cadre of committed scholars. They share their agenda with non-scholars, as well, but only the scholars will be discussed in this book. From time to time scholars in other fields enter the realm of Cultic studies because they have an interest in, for example, child abuse or domestic violence or family dynamics. How much these individuals actually share the values of Cultic studies is debatable, but they apparently share them enough to get published by the most well-known and well-funded anticult group in the United States, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA). The ICSA website lists hundreds of scholars, activists, writers, poets and artists who have participated in ICSA workshops and conferences and/or been published in ICSA's periodicals. In addition to ICSA publications, authors who share some ideas with Cultic studies sometimes are published by mainstream or academic presses, but not often. Cultic studies has interesting overlaps with other scholarly emphases and organizations, but the larger academic community, nationally and internationally, does not recognize Cultic studies as the field that provides modern society with the most reliable information and interpretations of NRMs. That distinction goes to NRM studies.

The earliest generation of scholars who approached NRMs as worthy subjects of study are surveyed in Chapter Two. They mostly came from a liberal Protestant background, and although they did not renounce their Christian faith, they were able to find room in their Christian perspective for anomalous religions at the time, like Christian Science, Spiritualism, Seventh-day Adventism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Theosophy. These individuals were active in publishing from approximately the 1930s through the 1960s, and mostly predate the Sixties counterculture revolution.

The next cohort of scholars were born during the years that the first group were busy publishing, during the 1930s and 1940s. They include Dick Anthony, William Sims Bainbridge, Eileen Barker, James A. Beckford, Mary Farrell Bednarowski, David G. Bromley, George D. Chryssides , Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., Jeffrey K. Hadden, J. Gordon Melton, Timothy Miller, Susan J. Palmer, James T. Richardson, Thomas Robbins, Anson S. Shupe, Jr., Rodney Stark, and Roy Wallis. They were young scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, only a little older than many of the NRM members whom they studied! And in several cases they admitted to sharing in the values and emotional tendencies characteristic of the Baby Boomer generation, from which the vast majority of NRM recruits came.[31]

They were followed by NRM scholars born in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, who worked with and in some cases were mentored by members of the earlier cohort. Among them were Douglas E. Cowan, Lorne L. Dawson, Eugene V. Gallagher, Massimo Introvigne, Jeffrey Kaplan, James R. Lewis, Scott Lowe, Phillip Charles Lucas, Rebecca Moore, Jean Rosenfeld, John Simmons, Bron Taylor, Catherine Wessinger, and Stuart A. Wright.

The most recent generation of scholars who have developed specialization in NRM studies include Marie Dallam, Holly Folk, Megan Goodwin, Cathy Gutierrez, Dawn Hutchinson, Jeremy Rapport, Elijah Siegler, Hugh Urban, and Benjamin Zeller.

Author's Strategy

I have interviewed numerous individuals from different generations and disciplines. I have read hundreds of books and articles (not always in their entirety). The facts are here, and they are legion. But this book is does more than simply provide data. I have shaped and molded what I've learned into an interesting narrative that does justice to the scholars of NRM studies

and Cultic studies, and to the history that they recall, and to the scholarly insights embedded in their interviews and in their published work. The interpretations are mine and mine alone.

Many readers will notice the absence of important NRMs. The field of NRM studies has adopted, or coopted, many religious traditions that were marginalized in their host countries or regions, or were mainstream until they came to North America, at which point they became NRMs. These traditions include the following.

> *Black Muslim groups* integrate Islamic concepts and practices with Afrocentric beliefs in the superiority of black Americans. They arose in the context of racial prejudice and violence early in the twentieth century. The most well-known example of a Black Muslim group is the Nation of Islam. Other examples include the Moorish Science Temple and the Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths.[32]
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> *African diaspora religions* are syncretic creations of enslaved populations in the Caribbean islands and Brazil. Africans brought to these locations by European colonial powers to work the plantations integrated traditional African beliefs and practices with the Roman Catholicism of their French, Spanish, and Portuguese slave masters. Examples of African diaspora religions are Santería, Rastafarianism, Candomblé, and Vodou.[33]
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> *African Independent Churches* (AICs) are religious traditions in sub-Saharan Africa that mix the Protestant or Catholic faiths of missionaries who went to Africa with local traditions. They may incorporate indigenous aspects of African religion with missionary religions, and may also incorporate African interpretations of missionary religions that the missionaries themselves never intended. AICs can be divided into

Ethiopian churches, Zionist churches, Aladura Pentecostal churches, and Messianic churches. [34]

Asian new religions integrate worldviews and ritual practices from the religions of South Asia and East Asia. As transplanted in the West, these groups mix older traditions from Asian regions with newer attitudes and practices resulting their accommodation to Western societies. Examples of Asian new religions are the Vedanta Society, Soka Gakkai, the Unification Church, the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), and the Bahá'ís.[35]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormonism, is a religion that began in the antebellum period under the leadership of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844). Mormonism teaches that God directed some ancient Hebrews to journey to the New World, and that Jesus appeared in his resurrected form to the descendants of those first Hebrew voyagers in America after appearing to the Twelve Apostles following the resurrection. Mormons have been enormously successful in spreading their form of the Christian gospel message. They are the vast majority of the population in Utah, where their ancestors located en masse following their prophet's death.[36]

International Pentecostalism covers the older Pentecostal churches, the Charismatic movement, and the newer wave of Pentecostal groups. They have experienced dramatic growth in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. Examples in this category include the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil and the Deeper Christian Life Ministry in Nigeria.[37]

In Japan, there are numerous religions, often blending Japanese Buddhist traditions with native Shinto, that generally promise healing through various rituals, leaders, and texts. Some scholars call the most recent ones *New New Religions* because they arose after late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century New Religions. Aum Shinrikyô was a New New Religion that became notorious for its release of poison gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995.[38]

The paranormal includes a wide range of phenomena that supposedly reveal dimensions of reality filled with mystery and promise. Examples of the paranormal include UFOs, monsters, ghosts, and telepathy. Most paranormal beliefs and practices exist outside of major religious traditions. However, Marian apparitions are usually preserved within the Roman Catholic Church.[39]

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) in 1952. It was originally a therapeutic philosophy designed to enhance well-being in clients, but evolved into an elaborate and secretive international organization that has become among the most controversial of NRMs in the twentieth century.[40]

Western esoteric religion refers to the blend of ancient and early modern secret traditions rooted in western occultism and Jewish mysticism, as well as some elements from Asian traditions. Examples of western esotericism include Swedenborgianism, Rosicrucianism, alchemy, astrology, and Theosophy.[41]

In this book, I provide no systematic treatment of the scholarship for any of these movements, traditions, and churches. The sequence of topics found herein have a certain logic that hopefully will be made clear as the reader progresses. Any of these neglected groups could

have fit, but not as well as Contemporary Paganism, whose chapter follows the chapter on gender quite naturally. And Contemporary Paganism is the only religious tradition that rates its own chapter. Otherwise this narrative is about NRM scholarship in broader terms, not zeroed in on the scholarship of particular traditions.

This book is an *introduction* to the history of NRM studies, not an in-depth examination. Therefore each chapter opens with a vignette about a scholar whose life and work aptly sets the stage for discussion of that chapter's subject. The study of NRMs is very much a human and humane enterprise, and these vignettes are intended to dramatize that fact. Each chapter also highlights only a few key individuals and ideas. Hopefully this strategy will make otherwise complex and arcane ideas accessible to the general reader. At the end of every chapter, I have listed sources in a select bibliography that will provide a starting point should anyone want to explore certain topics more thoroughly.

Chapter Two, "Early Scholarship," considers scholarship completed before the counterculture era of the 1960s. Much of the discussion about what would eventually be labeled NRMs was done by sociologists struggling with models of church and sect, and by liberal Protestant writers who described such groups without appealing to stereotypes. Chapter Two also includes a section on the countercult, those Protestant Evangelicals who wrote against alternative religions, beginning in the early 1900s and persisting up to the present.

Chapter Three, "NRM Studies: From 1965 to 1979," examines the early efforts of scholars with little connection to one another to make sense of the religious flowering occurring in North America during and following the counterculture era. Chapter Four, "Bringing People Together," extends our analysis of the fledgling field of NRM studies, showing how scholars began to find one another through venues like conferences and peer-reviewed journals.

Chapters Five, “Cultic Studies,” focuses on the growth of Cultic studies out of concerns by parents and helping professionals regarding young adult converts to NRMs. This anticult movement relied on earlier scholarship on brainwashing to articulate those concerns, and a history of the idea of brainwashing is included in this chapter.

Chapter Six, “NRM Studies in the 1980s and early 1990s: Responding to Cultic Studies,” charts the paths that various scholars took to refute Cultic studies. One strategy was to study the anticult as yet another example of a social phenomena of the time. Another was to critique the brainwashing explanations used by the anticult. A third was to refute alarmist and anticult messages about the causes of the Satanic panic of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Chapter Seven, “Violence and NRM Studies,” assesses the scholarship by NRM studies scholars on this topic, one that Cultic studies accused them of either neglecting or disparaging as unimportant. Tragic events that attracted widespread notice, like Jonestown in 1978 and the Branch Davidian/Waco fiasco in 1993, persuaded scholars in NRM studies to invest time and effort in investigating violence.

In Chapter Eight, “Gender: Past and Present,” we consider the scholarship that first established gender as an important area in NRM studies. Much work was initially done on historic NRMs, like Christian Science and Spiritualism, but the 1970s saw the dawning of ethnographic work on contemporary NRMs, and eventually this approach dominated gender scholarship on NRMs.

Chapter Nine, “Fieldwork and NRM Studies,” we see that interactions in the field with subjects evolved over time. Initially scholars of NRM studies used the methods and theories in fieldwork available to them, from both anthropology and sociology. But the trajectory of

fieldwork changes led to reflexivity, which was which practiced most creatively by scholars in Pagan studies.

The book ends with Chapter Ten: Conclusion. The present status of NRM studies is surveyed, suggesting both positive and negative aspects. And some predictions are made about the future of NRM studies. New ways of looking at NRMs provide hope that the field will survive and thrive into the twenty-first century.

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[1] Douglas E. Cowan, phone interview, 17 September 2005.
[2] Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, *The God Makers* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1984).
[3] Douglas E. Cowan, phone interview, 17 September 2005.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

[7] "cult" in *Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd ed. (The Clarendon Press, 1989): 4:119.

[8] Dorothea Baudy, "Kult/Kultus," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 4th ed. (Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck, 2001): 4: 1799-1800.
[9] Henton Davies, "Worship in the OT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962): 4: 880.
[10] As we will see in chapter five, the field of Cultic studies uses the term 'cult' in a scholarly fashion. Cultic studies differs from NRM studies. They believe that the process of joining and remaining in cults is dangerous to the health and well-being of cult members.
[11] "cult" in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 4:119.
[12] Baudy, 1802; Leopold von Wiese, *Systematic Sociology*, adapted and compiled by Howard Becker (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1932): 627. My thanks to Lorne Dawson for bringing this to my attention.
[13] Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 13-18; quotation from 14.
[14] J. Gordon Melton, "An Introduction to New Religions" in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 19.
[15] H.W. Turner, "A New Field in the History of Religions." *Religion* 1 (Spr. 1971): 15-16.
[16] Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1970): xi.
[17] Dereck Daschke and W. Michael Ashcraft, "Introduction" in *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2005): 3-4. The phrase 'Ultimate Concern' comes from the work of theologian Paul Tillich. Catherine Wessinger noted that Tillich meant by this phrase "a concern which is more important than anything else in the universe for the person [or the group] involved." (cf. Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000): 15.
[18] Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1998):1. Collins used the term 'intellectual', while in this book we will use the term 'scholar'. Although the two words can have very different usages, for our purposes here they are used synonymously.
[19] Ibid., 21.
[20] Ibid., 22.
[21] Ibid., 23.
[22] Ibid., 25, 27.

[23] Ibid., 29.
[24] R.J. Collins, "Intellectuals, Sociology of" *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1st edition, eds. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Bates (New York: Elsevier, 2001): 11:7632.
[25] Michele Lamont, "Three Questions for a Big Book: Collins's *The Sociology of Philosophies*," *Sociological Theory* 19.1 (March 2001): 89, quotation from Collins on 88.
[26] Gregory J. Feist, "The Influence of Personality on Artistic and Scientific Creativity," in *Handbook of Creativity*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 280, 282.
[27] Lamont, 91.
[28] M. Dogan, "Specialization and Recombination of Specialties in the Social Sciences,"in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 14851.

[29] Ibid., 14851-14852, quotation on 14851.
[30] Ibid., 14853. For further discussion of the development of the social sciences, see B. Wittrock, "Disciplines, History of, in the Social Sciences," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3721-3728.
[31] My project is not prosopography, or collective biography. Prosopography is the study of common experiences and environments of a group of actors, usually historical ones. In this book, my intention is not to write a collective biography of NRM studies scholars, worthy as that goal is. Rather, my purpose is to chart the evolution of the field of NRM studies, using cohorts, and individuals, who labored in parallel, and sometimes in harness. For prosopography, see Lawrence Stone's classic article, "Prosopography," *Daedalus* 100.1 (Winter 1971): 46-79. There are many fine prosopographies: Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*: *A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2001) about thinkers from different disciplines who met together with William James in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 1870s; and Dena Goldman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), about the contributions to the French Enlightenment made by men and women who frequented Parisian salons, or gatherings of intellectuals.
[32] See Edward E. Curtis, IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[33] See Joseph M. Murphy, *Working the Spirit: Ceremonies of the African Diaspora* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).
[34] See Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2001). The middle word beginning with the letter "I" in the phrase "African I—Churches" can mean Independent, Initiated, Instituted, or Indigenous.
[35] See Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington, Ind. and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); E. Burke Rochford, Jr., *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985); and George D. Chryssides, *The Advent of Sun Myung Moon: The Origins, Beliefs and Practices of the Unification Church* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).
[36] Terryl L. Givens, *The Latter-day Saint Experience in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004)
[37] See Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Edward L. Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2011).

[38] See Peter B. Clarke and Jeffrey Sommers, eds., *Japanese New Religions in the West* (Routledge, 1994).
[39] See Christopher D. Bader, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph O. Baker, *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010).

[40] See Hugh B. Urban, *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[41] See Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994) and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005).