



Scientology

James R. Lewis

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Scientology is arguably the most persistently controversial of all contemporary New Religious Movements. The Church of Scientology has been involved in battles over tax issues, a ten-year conflict with the Food and Drug Administration, extended turmoil with a number of European governments, and has even been subjected to FBI raids in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles.

Negative publicity, however, has not prevented the Church from experiencing remarkably steady growth. Official national census figures indicate that the number of Scientologists grew significantly in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia throughout the 1990s, and studies show that the Church gained 10,000 members in the United States during that decade. This has led Scientology to begin referring to itself as "The World's Fastest Growing Religion." But despite its highly public profile, recently enhanced by celebrity spokespersons like Tom Cruise and Isaac Hayes, little has been published about the Church, its history, theology, and mission.

The present volume brings together an international group of top scholars on New Religious Movements to offer an extensive and even-handed overview and analysis of all of these aspects of Scientology, including the controversies to which it continues to give rise. The book's six parts take a detailed look at the Church through its similarities to and differences from other religions, conflicts with various groups, overseas missions, and its theology, history, and sociology.

James R. Lewis has assembled an unusually comprehensive anthology, incorporating a wide range of different approaches. This volume is a welcome and long-overdue resource for scholars, students, and others interested in this controversial and little-understood religious movement.

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