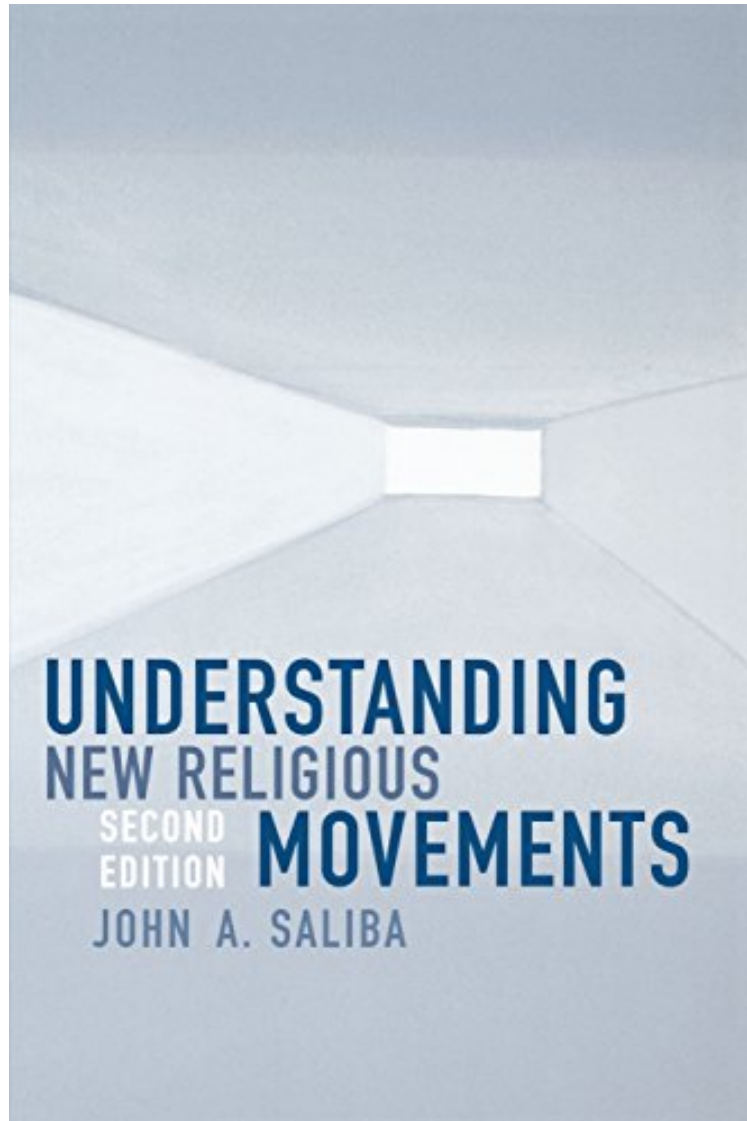


Understanding New Religious Movements

John Saliba

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Discussions of any religion can easily raise passions. But arguments tend to become even more heated when the religion under discussion is characterized as new. Divisions around the study of new religious movements (NRMs), or cults, or nontraditional or alternative or emergent religions are so acute that there is even controversy over what to call them. John Saliba strives to bring balance to these discussions by offering perspectives on new religions from different academic perspectives: history, psychology, sociology, law, theology, and counseling. This approach provides rich descriptions of a broad range of movements while demonstrating how the differing aims of the disciplines can create much of the controversy around NRMs. The new second edition has been updated and revised throughout and includes a new foreword by noted historian of religion, J. Gordon Melton. For classes in religion or the social sciences, or for interested individuals, *Understanding New Religious Movements* offers the most objective introduction possible.

From *Library Journal* Saliba (religious studies, Univ. of Detroit, Mercy) is a recent participant in a three-year Vatican study of new religious movements (NRMs). Despite his formal religious affiliations, his latest work is blessedly devoid of any doctrinal bias. Rather, it is a profound theological, historical, social, and legal analysis of new religious movements (a term Saliba prefers to cults, sects, etc.), beginning with the 11th-century Cathars (violently exterminated in the very first intra-Christian/governmental crusade) and concluding with the 20th-century Branch Davidians. Unlike many cult studies, his work does not limit its purview to Christian "heresies"; for example, Saliba devotes substantial attention to the Shabbatei Zevi Messianic movement within 17th-century Judaism. This is a thoroughly researched, well-constructed, unusually balanced, and scrupulously documented masterpiece. Were it not for its high intellectual level, it would belong on the shelves of every library. Given that level, however, it is recommended for purchase by academic libraries. Bill Piekarski, Southwestern Coll. Lib., Chula Vista, Cal. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. An ideal text for undergraduate courses as well as the single most important volume to recommend to someone who knows virtually nothing about New Religious Movements and their study. (Nova Religio) About the Author John A. Saliba, S.J., is professor of religious studies at the University of Detroit Mercy.