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Elements in New Religious Movements

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NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND SCIENCE

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New Religious Movements and Science

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Abstract: This Element shows how new religious movements (NRMs) variously conceptualize science and provides readers with an overview of the scholarly conversation surrounding this phenomenon. Section 1 describes five movements that, in different ways, include relevant references to science in their doctrines: Dianetics/Scientology, the Raëlian Movement, Falun Gong, Stella Azzurra (an Italian Santo Daime group), and Bambini di Satana (an Italian Satanist group). The conceptualization of science within these movements is examined in reference to official beliefs conveyed by the writings and claims of their respective leaders, but ethnographic work among affiliates is included as well. Section 2 reconstructs academic contributions by scholars who identify notable trends in the approaches to science within NRMs, or have developed typologies to describe that very understanding. Section 3 concludes the discussion of NRMs and science by offering suggestions regarding novel directions that the study of their relationship may take.

Keywords: new religious movements, religion and science, new religious movements and science, religion and pseudoscience, pseudoscience

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