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Elements in New Religious Movements

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ABUSE IN NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

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Abuse in New Religious Movements

Elements in New Religious Movements

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Abstract: This Element analyses issues of abuse in new religious movements (NRMs). It argues that abuse in NRMs is not unique but that certain factors can be intensified in NRM contexts – propensities for separation from wider society, teachings on unique legitimacy and exclusivity and charismatic authority. First, a historical overview addresses how abuse in NRMs has been approached and understood, linking this to the development of NRM and cultic studies and their preferred terminology. Second, a theoretical framework allows consideration of the ways in which the interlinked structural and cultural factors of religious movements can contribute to the perpetration, legitimisation or concealment of abuse. Finally, the Element presents an applied case study analysing the interplay of these factors in the Jesus Fellowship Church, a UK-based NRM which closed in 2019, partly in recognition of abuses that had occurred. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Keywords: abuse, New Religious Movements, cults, Jesus Fellowship Church, gender and sexuality

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