



Even New Religious Movements Have Legacies¹

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Abstract

Hundreds of thousands of new religious movements (NRMs) have made an appearance throughout the world since time immemorial. The majority of them have gathered only a small following for a generation or two, but then they are more likely than not to die out and be forgotten. Many of them do manage, however, to leave a legacy that makes its mark on the wider society, which often forgets their origin. This paper looks at some of those legacies in an attempt to indicate the broad range of innovations that have emanated from some of the more recent religious manifestations during their early years.

Keywords

Arts; Ecology; Environment; Businesses; Education; Healing; Health; Innovation; Good works; Law; New religious movements (NRMs); Politics; Welfare

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Karl Marx is known for arguing that the economic base of a society determines its general culture and ideas, and that religion is “the opium of the masses”.² On the other hand, the German sociologist Max Weber argued that this was not necessarily so, most famously with his thesis that the Protestant ethic was largely responsible for the rise of modern capitalism.³ This article starts from an assumption that, at any time, there are thousands of voices, ideas and practices ‘out there’, although only a few will be chosen while the rest

¹ An earlier version of this paper was published in James Walters (ed.), *Religious Imaginations: How Narratives of Faith are Shaping Today's World*, (London: Gingko, 2018), 159–76.

² Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of the Right” (1843–4), in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, ed. Thomas Bottomore (London: Watts, 1963), 43–59.

³ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) (London: Unwin, 1995).

fall by the wayside, unheeded or soon to be forgotten. But there will always be some that are adopted, initially by only a small group of people who will experiment with this new (or renewed) resource, which may then be adopted or adapted by the wider society.

‘Cults’, ‘Sects’ and New Religious Movements (NRMs)

There are over a thousand different religions active in the UK today, and many thousands more elsewhere throughout the world.⁴ In the sociological literature, concepts such as ‘cult’ and ‘sect’ have technical meanings, but in popular parlance they now tend to mean a religion or group of which the speaker disapproves. As a consequence, since the early 1970s, scholars have tended to prefer to talk about new religious movements (NRMs). There are problems with this concept too, but for present purposes, following the theologian Paul Tillich, religion is defined very broadly as a system of beliefs and practices that address questions of ultimate concern;⁵ and a new religious movement is one that consists primarily of a first-generation membership.⁶ Although not perfect, this approach can help us to look for certain characteristics that new religions often, but by no means always, share. First, however, it needs to be stressed, that the one fact of which we can be sure concerning new religions is that we *cannot* generalise about them; they can and do differ in every conceivable way.

Nonetheless, the very fact that if an NRM is defined as having first-generation membership, this means that its members are converts, and converts tend to be far more enthusiastic, even fanatic, than those born into their religion. Secondly, NRMs tend to appeal disproportionately to an atypical section of the population – in the past they have frequently appealed to the socially, economically and/or politically oppressed; however, the wave of new religions that became visible in the West in the 1960s and 1970s appealed disproportionately to young, middle-class, white adults who were well-educated and came from what, according to several criteria, would be called ‘good families’. Thirdly, founders of NRMs are often charismatic leaders who wield charismatic authority, are unbound by rules or tradition, are accountable to no one, and can change their minds at a moment’s notice. Fourthly, the movement’s *Weltanschauung* can be of a strictly dichotomous nature, with clear-cut boundaries between, for example, godly and satanic, good and bad, right and wrong, before and after, and, perhaps most significantly, them and us. Fifthly, NRMs are likely to be treated with suspicion, fear, discrimination and antagonism by the host society. This is hardly surprising as they are offering an alternative to those who may well have a vested interest in preserving the *status quo*. And, finally, new religions change far more radically and rapidly than older religions. Although some (such as the Amish or Hutterites) manage to maintain what sociologists might technically call sectarian characteristics into

⁴ The Inform website houses some information on over 5,000 religious organisations. See: www.Inform.ac/

⁵ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 1–4.

⁶ Eileen Barker, “What Are We Studying? A Sociological Case for Keeping the ‘Nova,’” *Nova Religio* 8, no. 1 (2004): 88–102.

second and subsequent generations, most new religions that survive undergo ‘denominationalisation’, accommodating to, and being increasingly accommodated by, the wider society. While the religions cited in what follows are by no means all still first-generation movements, most of the practices and beliefs referred to are the result of their early days, before any accommodation to society had fully taken place.

Politics

The third and fourth of the characteristics mentioned above (charismatic authority and a dichotomous worldview) can enable a new religion to pursue, in a relatively single-minded way, a particular kind of political structure (although many will combine this with theocratic beliefs). This structure may be authoritarian (as in Jim Jones’ People’s Temple); democratic (as in the Findhorn community); bureaucratic (as in the Church of Scientology); patriarchal (as in the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church); matriarchal (as in the Brahma Kumaris); or anarchistic (as are some ‘virtual religions’, such as Discordianism,⁷ to be found on the Internet).

It has been argued that early Christianity introduced the idea of the separation of Church and State.⁸ Such separation was not, however, widely accepted within Christendom until the Reformation and when the Anabaptists in the early sixteenth century taught that the church should be composed of free, ‘uncompelled’ people, without the state coercing people’s consciences. The early Anabaptists were, consequently, routinely drowned or burnt at the stake, but it was these ideas which would eventually make a significant contribution to the adoption of the First Amendment of the US Constitution in 1791,⁹ which continues to be hotly defended by religions old and new in the United States (and elsewhere), but perhaps most notably by the Anabaptist-inspired Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, which today declares itself to be “the only faith-based agency devoted solely to religious liberty and the institutional separation of church and state”.¹⁰

The Law

NRMs have long tested the boundaries of legal definitions and challenged existing norms and protocol. Although they generally obey the law of the land, Jehovah’s Witnesses have, since their inception, refused to put the law of man above the law of God, and

⁷ <https://discordia.fandom.com/wiki/Discordianism/>

⁸ See, for example, Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17.

⁹ “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

¹⁰ See: <http://bjconline.org/>; See also: James Dunn, “Neutrality and the Establishment Clause,” in *Equal Separation: Understanding the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment*, ed. P J Weber, (Westport: Greenwood, 1990), 55–72.

when the two conflict, they have been prepared to die rather than submit to the law of man. Around 10,000 Witnesses were incarcerated in Auschwitz and other concentration camps during the Second World War when, unlike Jews, homosexuals or gypsies, they could have been released had they sworn allegiance to the Nazi regime.¹¹ Though not with such dire results, US students could legally be expelled from their school if they refused to salute the American flag, until in 1943 the US Supreme Court ruled in a case brought by a Jehovah's Witness that it was unconstitutional to enforce activities such as the flag salute.¹² While there were several religions, notably the Society of Friends (the Quakers),¹³ who undoubtedly contributed to changes in the law regarding conscientious objection, Jehovah's Witnesses have played and continue to play a significant role in changing the law in numerous countries throughout the world.¹⁴ After years of fighting in the courts, Witnesses succeeded in persuading the Republic of Korea (South Korea) to amend its laws on conscientious objection,¹⁵ although, at the time of writing, four remain in prison,¹⁶ and hundreds more still have a criminal record for refusing to take part in military service. Jehovah's Witnesses have also played an important role in securing the right to proselytise. Between 1938 and 1992 there were around 20,000 cases in Greece of Witnesses being accused of proselytism. One of these, Minos Kokkinakis, was exiled six times, arrested over sixty times and served about five years in prison. In a landmark judgement, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in 1992 that Greece had violated Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights,¹⁷ and was ordered to pay Kokkinakis three million drachmas (about 10,000 euros).¹⁸ Indeed, Jehovah's Witnesses' contribution to changing and redefining the law by bringing cases before the ECtHR,¹⁹ the US Supreme

¹¹ Christine King, *The Nazi State and the Nazi New Religions* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1982).

¹² D R Manwaring, *Render Unto Caesar: The Flag-Salute Controversy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Charles Russo (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Education Law* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 642–644.

¹³ Gordon J. Melton, "A New Religion Fights for Peace: The Case of the Quakers in Korea," *The Journal of CESNUR* 4, no. 5 (2020): 27–41.

¹⁴ Tony Brace, "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Law: Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God," in *Reactions to the Law by Minority Religions*, ed. Eileen Barker and James T. Richardson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 37–57; Amnesty International, *Conscientious Objection to Military Service* (London, 1991); Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokosa, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe. Past and Present* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016); Gary Perkins, *Bible Student Conscientious Objectors in World War One* (Charleston, SC: Hupomone Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Tony Brace, "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Law," 39–42.

¹⁶ See: <https://www.jw.org/en/news/legal/by-region/world/jehovahs-witnesses-in-prison-2/>

¹⁷ *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

¹⁸ Besier and Stokosa, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe. Past and Present*, 293–295; V Lykes and James T. Richardson, "The European Court of Human Rights, Minority Religions, and New Versus Original Member States," in *Legal Cases, New and Religious Movements, and Minority Faiths*, ed. James T. Richardson and François Bellanger (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), 177fn.

¹⁹ For details of NRM cases that have appeared before the ECtHR, see: Lykes and Richardson, "The European Court of Human Rights, Minority Religions, and New Versus Original Member States," 171–201.

Court and many other Courts of Appeal has had a significant effect not only on the community of Witnesses, but also on the rest of the social world – especially, though by no means only, in the realm of religious freedom.²⁰

Other areas where new religions have fought to have the law changed or clarified include those of the definition of religion and of access to tax privileges. The Church of Scientology has long fought on these fronts in a number of countries.²¹ In 1969 it succeeded in becoming incorporated in South Australia and Victoria under the name of the ‘Church of the New Faith’, and eventually, having been refused tax-exemption at various levels on the grounds of not really being a religion, won acceptance as a *bona fide* religion by the High Court of Australia.²² In the United States, Scientology had been recognised as a religion back in 1957, but in 1967 its tax-exempt status was revoked in California, where it was headquartered. Then in October 1993, ending one of the longest-running tax disputes in American history, the Inland Revenue Service agreed to grant tax exemption to the Church and more than 150 of its related corporations, which would, reportedly, save the organisation at least tens of millions of dollars a year.²³

In England and Wales, it had long been assumed that “the advancement of religion” was synonymous with the promotion of the Church of England.²⁴ Gradually, however, the concept expanded to include other faiths and denominations with, in common law, religion coming to be defined as “faith in a god and worship of that god”.²⁵ Then, partly, it might be argued, because of the sudden visibility of unpopular new religions or ‘cults’, the 2006 Charities Act (elaborated in 2011) stated that ‘Public Benefit’ needed to be demonstrated. This resulted in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (known as the Mormon Church) losing an appeal at the ECtHR in 2014 to register its temples, which are open only to Mormons. And while Scientology eventually found that, in certain circumstances, it might be accepted as a religion, it was unable to demonstrate its public benefit to the satisfaction of the UK Charity Commissioners. It was, however, by no means clear exactly where the law drew the line between benefits and dis-benefits and between public and restricted access, and when the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (popularly known as the Exclusive Brethren) applied to register one of its Trusts, this was denied on the basis of a number of complaints that claimed its practices were detrimental not only

²⁰ James T. Richardson, “In Defense of Religious Rights: Jehovah’s Witness Legal Cases around the World,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Christianity: Movements, Institutions & Allegiance*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 285–307.

²¹ Eric Roux, “Scientology Behind the Scenes: The Law Changer,” in *Reactions to the Law by Minority Religions*, ed. Eileen Barker and James T. Richardson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 58–78.

²² *Church of New Faith v Commissioner of Pay-Roll Tax* (1983).

²³ Eric Roux, “Scientology Behind the Scenes,” 58–78.

²⁴ Eileen Barker, “We’re Happy to Talk, But Dialogue ...? Courteous Discrimination in Establishment Parlance,” in *Limitations of Religious Freedom by Privileged State Religions (Ecclesiae) – Particularly in Authoritarian States, but Also in Democracies*, ed. Gerhard Besier (Zurich: Lit Verlag GmH & Co. 2020), 143–168.

²⁵ Russell Sandberg, *Religion and Legal Pluralism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 27.

for many of its members but also for former members and the families of members who were completely cut off from their relatives. Furthermore, it was argued, the exclusiveness of the church meant that it offered no public benefit. This test case became something of a *cause célèbre* with clergy, politicians and the media arguing forcefully on both ‘sides’. Eventually, in 2014, the Charity Commissioners decided to grant charitable status so long as the Trust amended its deeds, and then only on the understanding that the status was provisional and subject to withdrawal if further substantial complaints were received.²⁶

Meanwhile, in 2013, the Supreme Court ruled not only that Scientology should be recognised as a religion but also that one of its London buildings could be described as a “place of meeting for religious worship” and recorded as a place for the solemnisation of marriages. In their unanimous decision, the Supreme Court justices said that a 1970 ruling’s definition of religious worship as involving “reverence or veneration of God or of a supreme being”²⁷ was out of date and that religion should not be confined to religions which recognise a supreme deity: “To do so would be a form of religious discrimination unacceptable in today’s society”. Furthermore, recognising the Scientology building as a place of worship would mean that “Buddhist temples do not need to be squeezed in by way of an unexplained exception”.²⁸

Other movements that have tested the courts as to whether or not they can be regarded as ‘religious’ include a number of what have been termed ‘invented religions’. These have been defined by Carole Cusack (2010) as those which assert that their teachings are new not only because they cannot be traced to some divine revelation, but also because they are, explicitly, the product of human imagination. At least two of these have challenged the application of laws referring to religious dress. The founder of the International Church of Jediism, which has claimed 500,000 followers worldwide,²⁹ was told that wearing the hood of his religious robe flouted the rules of a large grocery chain in which he was shopping, leading him to announce he would be seeking legal advice. More successfully, Pastafarians, followers of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster,³⁰ have persuaded (some) authorities to ‘bend the rules’ concerning official photographs for passports and driving licences by allowing them to wear colanders as their religious headgear.³¹

Returning, on a more sober note, to challenges and clarifications of legal approaches to tax law, although Jehovah’s Witnesses had been officially registered in France since 1947, they were sent a tax bill for over \$50 million in 1998, which would have annihilated the

²⁶ See: <https://www.hunterslaw.com/charity-breakthrough-for-plymouth-brethren/>

²⁷ *R v Registrar General ex parte Segerdal and Another* (1970).

²⁸ See the video of Lord Toulson’s judgement at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25331754/>.

²⁹ In the England and Wales 2001 Census, 390, 127 people stated their religion as Jedi, making it the fourth largest reported religion.

³⁰ See: <https://wrlrelts.org/2016/10/08/church-of-the-flying-spaghetti-monster/>

³¹ See, for example: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2014553/Pastafarian-wins-right-wear-sievehead-driving-licence-photo-does-belong-Church-Flying-Spaghetti-Monster.html/>; <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/news/pastafarian-lindsay-miller-allowed-wear-colander-head-driving-licence-photo-a6735351.html/>

movement in France. This was justified by means of a new definition of contributions to Witness congregations as being equivalent to gifts made to individuals, and taxed at a high rate (60 percent). The Witnesses sought redress through the French court system, but to no avail.³² They then appealed to the ECtHR, which, finally in 2011, ruled in their favour, stating that to force the dissolution of a religious group was a violation of Article 9, and that the Witnesses could not have foreseen the change in interpretation of the gift provisions of the tax code. The Court later administered considerable damage and cost awards to refund the money required to appeal the case, thereby sending a clear message to all Council of Europe nations that religious groups should be allowed to function.³³ Two other, smaller religious organisations (the Aumists and the Evangelical Missionary Church) were also threatened by the new interpretation of French tax codes, and the ECtHR ruled in favour of them too, with large damage awards.

NRMs have also played a role in determining the precise application of the Free Exercise Clause of the US First Amendment (see note 9 above). A central issue is the extent to which the state can regulate the activities of religious organisations. Many, but not all, regulatory statutes provide exemptions from coverage for religious organisations. However, in the mid-1980s a case was brought by the US Department of Labor against the Alamo Foundation, claiming it had violated the minimum wage, overtime, and record-keeping provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by operating a variety of commercial businesses that were staffed by approximately 300 ‘associates’, most of whom had been drug addicts, derelicts, or criminals before their rehabilitation. These associates received no wages, but were provided with food, clothing, shelter, and other benefits such as medical care. The Foundation claimed such activities were part of its religious mission, to “establish, conduct and maintain an evangelistic church, and generally to do those things needful for the promotion of Christian faith, virtue and charity”, and it was a violation of the Free Exercise Clause for the state to interfere and insist that ‘volunteer associates’ should be paid a minimum wage. The US Supreme Court concluded, however, that the associates’ Free Exercise rights were not infringed as they were free to return their wages to the Foundation. Furthermore, since the Supreme Court’s 1985 decision, Congress has refused to exempt the commercial activities of religious organisations from FLSA coverage, although retaining an exemption for employees engaged in non-commercial activities.³⁴

Another aspect of the Free Exercise Clause was challenged when Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, an evangelical organisation, held numerous religious events throughout the United States, selling religious and other merchandise. In 1980, California’s Board of Equalization informed the Ministries that its sales were not exempt from California’s Sales

³² Lykes and Richardson, “The European Court of Human Rights, Minority Religions, and New Versus Original Member States,” 180.

³³ Tony Brace, “Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Law,” 39–42.

³⁴ US Supreme Court, *Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation v. Secretary of Labor* (1985). See: <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/471/290/>; <http://uscivilliberties.org/cases/4600tony-and-susan-alamo-foundation-v-secretary-of-labor-471-us-290-1985.html/>

and Use Tax. The Ministries objected, claiming the First Amendment exempted its products from the tax. Eventually the Supreme Court ruled that, for the First Amendment to be violated, the tax would have had to place a “substantial burden on the observation of a central religious belief or practice” that would require a “compelling governmental interest” to withstand the Ministries’ challenge. Because the tax imposed was on items sold, not a general exercise of religious liberty, the Court held the Ministries were not exempt. As a result, state regulation of religious affairs was increased, giving religious organisations less independence from generally applicable laws.³⁵

Yet another aspect of the legal implementation of the First Amendment was brought to the US Supreme Court by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), when the California Supreme Court upheld a Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) ordinance barring devotees from soliciting donations inside airport terminals. After winning in the district court then losing in the circuit court, ISKCON finally lost its case in 1992 when the Supreme Court ruled six to three that the city’s prohibition was constitutional because an airport terminal was not a ‘public forum’. In 2010, the Krishnas tried again, but on appeal the California Supreme Court again ruled that the LAX restriction on solicitation was constitutional, thereby narrowing ISKCON’s legal options.³⁶

On a somewhat different tack, Italian cases concerning the Children of God’s practice of ‘flirty fishing’,³⁷ and the Romanian Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute’s (MISA’s) use of adult movies as a way of spreading their ideas,³⁸ have contributed to redefining legal notions about prostitution and pornography.

Businesses

Although new religions tend to emphasise theological and/or spiritual beliefs, this does not mean they may not be concerned with matters of business, sometimes in surprisingly innovative ways.

The Perfectionist Oneida Community, founded in 1848 by John Humphrey Noyes in Oneida, NY is probably best known for its unconventional sexual practices and ‘complex marriages’.³⁹ It is, however, also remarkable for establishing one of the earliest joint-stock companies, in which members became shareholders and which included a woman on its board of directors. The Community canned fruits and vegetables, made animal traps and

³⁵ *Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Appellant v. Board of Equalization of California* (1990). See: <http://uscivilliberties.org/cases/3995-jimmy-swaggart-ministries-v-board-of-equalization-of-california-493-us-378-1990.html/>

³⁶ See <https://www.utahkrishnas.org/barred-from-airport-hare-krishnas-to-spread-message-elsewhere/>

³⁷ See: <https://www.cesnur.org/testi/TheFamily/italy.htm>

³⁸ Raffaella Di Marzio, “MISA, the Anti-Cult Movement and the Courts: The Legal Repression of an Esoteric Movement,” *The Journal of CESNUR* 1 (2017): 20–31.

³⁹ Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991); George Wallingford Noyes (compiler) and Lawrence Foster (eds.), *Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

chains, travelling bags, mop sticks, sewing silk, surgical instruments and, most successfully, silverware. Indeed, although the community has long since died out, Oneida Ltd continues to thrive and be known throughout the world for its tableware and other products.⁴⁰

The Amana Colonies in Iowa were early producers of household appliances including refrigerators and freezers; they have also been credited with inventing the first home microwave oven, the Amana Radar Range.⁴¹ The so-called Shakers movement, a mid-eighteenth century offshoot of the Quakers, although by 2019 there were only two surviving members,⁴² remains known for scores of inventions, such as the circular saw, the apple parer, the wheel-driven washing machine, the Shaker Seed Company, its distinctive oval-shaped boxes and, above all, its simple, yet elegant wooden furniture.⁴³ Another, later, religious community that contributed to material culture was the Harmony Society which engaged in various constructions, including houses, churches and granaries, employing innovative techniques such as the use of a modular building.⁴⁴

Turning to the late twentieth century, among NRMs that have played a role in developments in computer programming was the ‘suicide cult’, Heaven’s Gate.⁴⁵ The Mormon Church, thanks to its practice of baptising the dead, has established the world’s largest genealogical library and become famous for its genealogical-search software.⁴⁶ Amway is among a number of organisations that have been dubbed cult-like with its promotion of pyramid selling.⁴⁷ Although it denies it is a religion, Landmark Forum, an outcome of Erhard Seminar Training (*est*), falls into the category of what have been termed ‘self religions’⁴⁸ or ‘world-affirming religions’.⁴⁹ It and other movements of this kind have introduced special ‘Human Potential’ techniques that are widely employed by large multi-national businesses to ‘develop’ their work force. Transcendental Meditation is similarly taught in corporations, schools and prisons.⁵⁰ More recently, a number of Buddhist groups new to the West have been teaching ‘mindfulness’ to a wide range of individuals and institutions.⁵¹ Likewise, numerous varieties of yogic practices are now encouraged in some Western schools and corporations.⁵²

⁴⁰ See: <https://www.oneida.com/flatware.html/>

⁴¹ See: <https://www.amana.com/kitchen/cooking/ranges.html/>

⁴² <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/last-shakers>

⁴³ See: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/shak/hd_shak.htm/

⁴⁴ Paul Douglas, *Architecture, Artifacts, and Arts in the Harmony Society of George Rapp: The Material Culture of a Nineteenth-Century American Utopian Community*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2008).

⁴⁵ See: https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/pgapzy/heavens-gate-web-designers-higher-source-suicide-cult/

⁴⁶ <https://www.familysearch.org/locations/saltlakecity-library/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.amway.co.uk/>

⁴⁸ Paul Heelas, “Californian Self Religions and Socializing the Subjective,” in *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, ed. Eileen Barker, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1982), 69–85.

⁴⁹ Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.meditationtrust.com/about-the-meditation-trust/>

⁵¹ See: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-rudell-beach/is-mindfulness-a-religion_b_6136612.html/

⁵² <https://www.yogajournal.com/teach/teaching-yoga-in-the-workplace/>

Healthy Living and Healing

Since religions began, many have stressed the importance of looking after one's body by keeping healthy, often introducing innovative practices and remedies for a wide range of afflictions, occasionally claiming to be capable of producing miracle cures.⁵³

Sometimes known for the introduction of Kellogg's cornflakes,⁵⁴ Seventh-Day Adventists, whose members are alleged to live up to ten years longer than most Americans,⁵⁵ has, since its inception, offered stress-management classes,⁵⁶ warned against the harmful effects of tobacco and excess salt, and advocated a healthy vegetarian diet, breathing and other exercises, and adequate rest. Its sanitarians and hospitals are known throughout the world for their research into preventative medicine.⁵⁷ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism) is another religion that claims its members live longer than average due to its theologically-based rules on diet and fasting.⁵⁸

When ISKCON first started attracting young hippies in the late 1960s, fears were expressed about health hazards for devotees, who were expected to restrain from meat, gambling, intoxicants and illicit drugs. Since then, the movement's vegetarian restaurants have become increasingly popular and have undoubtedly contributed to the radical change in attitudes about what constitutes a healthy diet.⁵⁹ Several other NRMs have introduced products that claim to have medicinal properties according to Ayurveda traditions; Sikh Dharma's Yogi Tea is but one example,⁶⁰ Unificationism's Ilhwa Ginseng products provide another.⁶¹

The Jehovah's Witnesses' controversial interpretation of the Bible forbidding blood transfusions (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14; Deuteronomy 12:23; Acts 15:29) has resulted in the death of several members, including children. This has, however, stimulated research into bloodless alternatives which are, reportedly, both safer and cheaper to administer.⁶²

⁵³ Eileen Barker and Sarah Harvey (eds.), *Health and Healing in Minority Religions*. (Abingdon: Routledge forthcoming).

⁵⁴ See: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/whitny-braun/seventhday-adventist-church-gaveyou-cereal_b_9527964.html/

⁵⁵ See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30351406/>

⁵⁶ See: <https://adventist.news/en/news/managing-stress-can-be-as-easy-as-12-3>

⁵⁷ Chris Rucker, *Seventh-Day Diet: A Practical Plan to Apply the Adventist Lifestyle to Live Longer, Healthier, and Slimmer in the 21st Century* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2002).

⁵⁸ See: <https://www.lds.org/topics/fasting-and-fast-offerings?lang=eng/>; https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/post/mormonism-good-for-the-body-as-well-as-the-soul/2012/06/20/gJQARk3IqV_blog.html?utm_term=.7dea6a962816/

⁵⁹ Benjamin Zeller, "Food Practices, Culture and Social Dynamics in the Hare Krishna Movement", in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, ed. Carole Cusack and Alex Norman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 681–702; see also: <https://info.iskcondesiretree.com/why-be-a-vegetarian/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.yogitea.com/en/about-us/our-story/>

⁶¹ <https://ilhwa.co.uk/>

⁶² Chrissydes, George D., "Health and Healing in the Watch Tower Organisation," in *Health and Healing in Minority Religions*, ed. Eileen Barker and Sarah Harvey (Abingdon: Routledge forthcoming).

Welfare, Good Works and Education

Many NRMs have made imaginative contributions to the well-being of non-members, although not all their acts of charity are appreciated – sometimes for good reason. Through its Narconon⁶³ and Criminon⁶⁴ programmes, Scientology offers help for, respectively, drug addiction and prisoners. The Family International’s work in Africa’s black townships, provides food, literacy classes and help in combatting AIDs.⁶⁵ The Holy Order of MANS pioneered confidential shelters for victims of domestic violence; various iterations of their ‘Raphael Houses’ are now a fixture in most mid-size towns throughout the US.⁶⁶ The recently disbanded Jesus Fellowship provided lodging and employment for the homeless and unemployed;⁶⁷ it also set up Jesus Centres, where migrants and others can drop in to receive a wide range of services and help.⁶⁸ ISKCON’s ‘Food for Life’ programme supplies hot meals for the homeless and victims in war zones and disaster areas.⁶⁹

Unimpressed by state schools, NRMs commonly home school or establish their own schools, often using innovative methods. One of the more influential educational systems, found in Waldorf schools (of which there are now over 900 worldwide), owes its origins to Anthroposophy.⁷⁰ Scientology promotes its ‘Study Technology’.⁷¹ Several NRMs have founded seminaries, colleges and universities where non-members are exposed to alternative world-views. Examples include the Unification Church,⁷² Soka Gakkai,⁷³ Transcendental Meditation,⁷⁴ and some, such as Oral Roberts University, associated with Televangelism.⁷⁵

See also: Improved outcomes and reduced costs associated with a health-system-wide patient blood management program: a retrospective observational study in four major adult tertiary-care hospitals – PubMed (nih.gov)

⁶³ <http://www.narconon.org/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.criminon.org/>

⁶⁵ <http://www.familyafrica.com/index.php/projects/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.raphaelhouse.org/>

⁶⁷ Eileen Barker, “Denominationalization or Death? A Comparative Examination of Processes of Change within the Jesus Fellowship Church and the Children of God aka The Family International,” in *The Demise of Religion: How Religions End, Die, or Dissipate*, ed. Michael Stausberg, Stuart A. Wright, and Carole M. Cusack (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 99–117.

⁶⁸ <http://www.jesusarmywatch.org.uk/scrapbook/cinema.htm>

⁶⁹ <https://iskconeducationalservices.org/HoH/further-information-and-teaching-resources-secondary/articles/art-0703-charity-food-for-life/> ; <https://ffl.org/>

⁷⁰ Liselotte Frisk, “The Anthroposophical Movement and the Waldorf Educational System,” in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, ed. Carole Cusack and Alex Norman, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 192–211.

See also: <http://www.waldorfanswers.org/Waldorf.htm>

⁷¹ Applied Scholastics International | ABLE

⁷² <https://uts.edu/index.php/> ; <https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/sun-moonuniversity/>; <https://www.bridgew.edu/>

⁷³ http://www.soka.edu/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMli-Ttu5my2AIVrLDtCh1w6QLpEAAAYAAAEgJnmfD_BwE/ ; <https://www.soka.ac.jp/en/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.mum.edu>

⁷⁵ <https://www.oru.edu/>

The Arts

A wide range of artists have been inspired by the teachings of NRMs such as Scientology, Theosophy, Swedenborgianism, Christian Science, Daesoon Jinrihoe, MISA and various spiritual and esoteric movements.⁷⁶ Traditional Korean and Chinese culture has been introduced to the West through, respectively, Unificationism's Little Angels Ballet,⁷⁷ and Falun Gong's Shen Yun.⁷⁸ Films 'with a message' include Unificationism's *Incheon*, starring Laurence Olivier,⁷⁹ numerous videos produced by the Church of Almighty God, praising God and condemning the Chinese government,⁸⁰ and The Family International's *Kiddy Viddies* and *Treasure Attic* series for children.⁸¹

There is a strong link between Rastafari and Reggae music, particularly as exemplified by Bob Marley, whose lyrics were rich in both biblical and political injunctions.⁸² Rastafari have also made important contributions to the visual arts, poetry and documentary films.⁸³

So far as architecture is concerned, several NRMs have constructed complexes that have become places of 'religious tourism'. ISKCON's New Vrindavan in West Virginia is one example,⁸⁴ Swaminarayan Mandirs are another.⁸⁵ Also renowned for 'sculptural architecture' is Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum.⁸⁶ Indeed, Steiner and Anthroposophy have been innovators *par excellence*, contributing to the worlds of politics, banking, diet, medicine, costume, poetry, literature, drama, painting, sculpture, dance (Eurythmy) and bio-dynamic agriculture.⁷⁹

Among the literary genres to which NRMs have made a significant contribution is that of science fiction. L Ron Hubbard was a prolific sci-fi author, and some suggest that Scientology itself owes its origins to science fiction. The Church of All Worlds boasts that it "may be the first religion to draw as much of its inspiration from the past, embracing science fiction as mythology with the same enthusiasm as we embrace the classical myths of ancient times".⁸⁷

⁷⁶ https://www.cesnur.org/religions_and_arts.htm

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUYcjmC9rqQ>

⁷⁸ <https://www.shenyunperformingarts.org/>

⁷⁹ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0084132/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPN3kBnoWx4/>

⁸¹ Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *Talking with the Children of God: Prophecy and Transformation in a Radical Religious Group* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010): 120; see also: <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Series/TreasureAttic> ; <http://www.nubeat.org/vid.html>

⁸² Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Justin Snider, "Identity, Subversion, and Reconstruction 'Riddims': Reggae as Cultural Expressions of Rastafarian Theology," in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, ed. Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman (Leiden: Brill 2012), 495–518.

⁸³ Darren Middleton, *Rastafari and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁸⁴ <http://www.newvrindaban.com/>

⁸⁵ Raymond Williams and Yogi Trivedi (eds.), *Swaminarayan Hinduism: Tradition, Adaptation, Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸⁶ Carole Cusack and Alex Norman (eds.), *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 174–191.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, part III

The Media

Several NRMs have developed newspapers and journals that are read far beyond their membership. *The Christian Science Monitor* and Unificationism's *Washington Times* are but two examples of papers covering international news. 'Freebies' include Jehovah's Witnesses' *Watchtower* and *Awake!* and the Worldwide Church of God's *Plain Truth*, which peaked at a worldwide circulation of 8.4 million in 1985.⁸⁸ Herbert W Armstrong's Radio Church of God (later the WCG, broadcasting as *The World Tomorrow*) started in the 1930s reaching millions of listeners; then, by the mid-1980s, under Armstrong's son, Garner Ted, a television version, aired on 382 US stations with 36 outlets internationally, was dwarfing televangelists such as Jim Bakker, Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, Robert Schuller and Jimmy Swaggart.⁸⁹ More recently, scores of new religions have made an impact through the Internet and social media. Among the more prominent of these are the 'invented religions', such as Discordianism.⁹⁰

Environmentalism and Ecology

There are literally hundreds of new spiritual and religious communities and groups that focus on human interaction with and dependency upon nature, Gaia and/or the environment.⁹¹ The New Age Movement and most Pagan groups are obvious examples.⁹² To a greater or lesser degree, movements such as the Findhorn Community,⁹³ the Church of All Worlds,⁹⁴ The Farm Ecovillage,⁹⁵ the Sri Aurobindo Ashram,⁹⁶ and Anthroposophy have been responsible for raising consciousness about ecological possibilities and disasters; the Holy Order of MANS was instrumental in organising a North American Conference on Religion and Ecology which catalysed ecology action-groups in many mainstream Christian denominations in the 1980s.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Oberon Zell, "The Church of All Worlds," in *Fiction, Invention and Hyper-Reality: From Popular Culture to Religion*, ed. Carole Cusack and Pavol Kosnác (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 266; Carole Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

⁸⁹ Stephen Flurry, *Raising the Ruins: The Fight to Revive the Legacy of Herbert W. Armstrong* (Philadelphia Church of God Inc, 2006), 2.

⁹⁰ David Robertson, "Making the Donkey Visible: Discordianism in the Works of Robert Anton Wilson," in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, ed. Carole Cusack and Alex Norman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 421–441.

⁹¹ James Lovelock, "Gaia," in *The New Age: An Anthology of Essential Writings*, ed. William Bloom (London: Random Century, 1991); Miller, Timothy, *American Communes, 1860–1960* (New York: Garland, 1990).

⁹² Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (London: Hurst, 2005).

⁹³ See: <https://www.findhorn.org/>

⁹⁴ See: <http://caw.org/content/>

⁹⁵ See: <http://www.thefarm.org/>

⁹⁶ See: <https://www.sriaurobindoashram.org/ashram/>

⁹⁷ Phillip C Lucas, "From Holy Order of MANS to Christ the Savior Brotherhood: The Radical Transformation of an Esoteric Christian Order," in *America's Alternative Religions*, ed. T Miller (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), 141–148.

Concluding Remark

Much, much more could be written about the many ways in which NRMs have contributed to what Robbins and Bromley have referred to as a “subterranean cultural tradition”.⁹⁸ I have tried to indicate just a few of the many ways in which their social, political, economic, theological and cultural experiments can make a significant contribution to the wider society. For better or worse (probably for both), there can be little doubt that the imaginations of new religions have left and will doubtless continue to leave a wide variety of innovative legacies for the wider society.

⁹⁸ Thomas Robbins and David G. Bromley, “What Have we Learned about New Religions? New Religious Movements as Experiments,” *Religious Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (1993): 211.

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