

christian science vs scientology

Christian Science vs Scientology: Exploring Two Unique Spiritual Paths

christian science vs scientology is a topic that often sparks curiosity and confusion. Both movements emerged in the United States around the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and both present alternative views on spirituality, healing, and the nature of existence. However, despite some surface similarities, Christian Science and Scientology are fundamentally different in doctrine, practice, and worldview. If you've ever wondered what sets these two apart, this article will take you on an insightful journey through their origins, beliefs, and cultural impact.

Origins and Historical Context

The Birth of Christian Science

Christian Science was founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879. Eddy's experiences with healing and her study of the Bible led her to develop a unique interpretation of Christianity, emphasizing spiritual healing and the unreality of matter. She published "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," which became the central text for the Christian Science Church. The movement grew rapidly, especially due to its focus on healing without conventional medicine, which attracted people seeking alternative health solutions.

The Emergence of Scientology

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard in the early 1950s. Originally a science fiction writer, Hubbard developed Scientology as a set of beliefs and practices aimed at improving human potential and spiritual awareness. His book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health" laid the foundation for the movement. Scientology focuses on self-discovery, mental health, and spiritual rehabilitation, utilizing a unique system called auditing. Unlike Christian Science, Scientology incorporates technology-like methods and a futuristic worldview.

Core Beliefs Compared

Christian Science: Spiritual Healing and the Nature

of Reality

At the heart of Christian Science is the belief that God is wholly good and that the material world, including illness and sin, is an illusion. According to Christian Science teachings, true reality is spiritual, and understanding this spiritual reality leads to healing. The movement emphasizes prayer and spiritual insight as means to overcome physical ailments, rather than relying on traditional medicine. This perspective is deeply rooted in Christian Scripture, though interpreted through Eddy's metaphysical lens.

Scientology: The Mind, The Spirit, and Personal Empowerment

Scientology's central concept is the "thetan," an immortal spiritual being that is the true self of each individual. Scientologists believe thetans have lived through multiple past lives and have the power to control matter, energy, space, and time. The goal of Scientology practices is to clear the individual of negative influences, called "engrams," that inhibit spiritual freedom. This is achieved through auditing sessions and study of Hubbard's extensive writings. Scientology blends a quasi-scientific approach with spiritual aims, focusing heavily on self-improvement and mental clarity.

Practices and Community Life

Healing Practices in Christian Science

Christian Science practitioners are known for their commitment to spiritual healing. They often provide prayer-based healing services and may refuse medical treatment, believing that spiritual understanding can cure disease. Christian Science churches offer services, reading rooms, and classes to educate members on their faith. The community places a strong emphasis on living a moral life aligned with divine laws as outlined in the Bible and Eddy's teachings.

Scientology Auditing and Training

In Scientology, auditing is a central practice. This one-on-one counseling seeks to help individuals recall and confront traumatic experiences from this life and previous ones, aiming to free them from mental and spiritual barriers. Scientologists also engage in extensive study programs to advance through levels of spiritual awareness, called Operating Thetan (OT) levels. The Church of Scientology is often described as hierarchical and organized, with a strong focus on recruiting and retaining members through courses and services.

Controversies and Public Perception

Both Christian Science and Scientology have faced their share of controversies, impacting how the general public views them.

Christian Science and Medical Ethics

Christian Science has been criticized for its stance on medical care, especially in cases involving children where reliance solely on prayer has led to preventable deaths. Legal challenges and debates continue in various jurisdictions about parents' rights to refuse medical treatment on religious grounds. Despite this, many Christian Scientists argue that their approach to healing is a deeply personal spiritual discipline.

Scientology's Legal Battles and Media Scrutiny

Scientology is well-known for its litigious history and secretive nature. Critics accuse the organization of aggressive tactics against detractors, as well as allegations of abuse and exploitation within the church. The movement's celebrity endorsements and high-profile members contribute to its complex public image. Scientology actively defends itself through legal means and public relations campaigns, often emphasizing its self-help benefits and spiritual goals.

Philosophical Differences in Worldview

While both movements engage with spirituality and healing, their underlying philosophies diverge significantly.

Theological Foundations of Christian Science

Christian Science is fundamentally Christian in its origin, asserting the Bible as the inspired word of God. Its theological framework is monotheistic, focusing on the omnipotence and benevolence of God. The denial of matter's reality and the emphasis on spiritual truth reflect a metaphysical interpretation of scripture, positioning Christian Science as a religious movement grounded in faith and divine law.

Scientology's Blend of Spirituality and Technology

Scientology rejects traditional religious frameworks, instead presenting itself as a religion that combines spiritual insight with a "scientific" approach to human consciousness. Its teachings revolve around self-knowledge and spiritual evolution, often framed in terms of technology-like processes

and courses. The belief in past lives and extraterrestrial origins of thetans adds a unique, sometimes controversial, dimension to its cosmology.

How to Understand Christian Science vs Scientology Today

If you're trying to understand the difference between Christian Science and Scientology, it's helpful to look beyond headlines and explore their teachings and practices with an open mind. Both offer alternative spiritual paths that attract people seeking answers outside mainstream religion and medicine. While Christian Science appeals mostly to those interested in faith-based healing and metaphysical Christianity, Scientology attracts individuals drawn to self-improvement, mental clarity, and a blend of spirituality with modern technology.

Key Takeaways for Spiritual Seekers

- Christian Science emphasizes healing through prayer and understanding of divine truth, rooted deeply in Christian scripture.
- Scientology promotes spiritual freedom and mental clarity via auditing and structured courses, with a distinct focus on personal empowerment.
- Both movements have faced criticism and legal challenges related to their practices and organizational methods.
- Each offers a unique perspective on spirituality that continues to influence religious and cultural landscapes today.

Exploring these paths can offer insights into the diverse ways humans seek meaning, healing, and connection to something greater than themselves. Whether you are researching for academic purposes, personal curiosity, or spiritual exploration, understanding the distinctions and commonalities between Christian Science and Scientology enriches the broader conversation about faith and science in modern life.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main difference between Christian Science and Scientology?

Christian Science is a religious movement founded by Mary Baker Eddy that

emphasizes healing through prayer and understanding of God, while Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard, focuses on spiritual rehabilitation through auditing and the study of the mind.

Are Christian Science and Scientology related in any way?

No, Christian Science and Scientology are entirely separate religions with different founders, beliefs, practices, and organizational structures.

How do Christian Science and Scientology approach healing?

Christian Science promotes healing through prayer and reliance on God, believing that illness is an illusion, whereas Scientology uses auditing sessions to clear mental blocks and spiritual impediments believed to cause physical and emotional problems.

What are the core beliefs of Christian Science compared to Scientology?

Christian Science centers on the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy's writings, emphasizing the power of divine mind and spiritual healing. Scientology is based on the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard, focusing on self-improvement, spiritual enlightenment, and overcoming past traumas through specific techniques.

How do Christian Science and Scientology view medical treatment?

Christian Science generally discourages conventional medical treatment, relying instead on prayer for healing. Scientology does not prohibit medical treatment but encourages its members to use its spiritual practices alongside traditional healthcare.

Which organization is larger or more widely known, Christian Science or Scientology?

Scientology is generally more widely known globally due to its celebrity members and controversial public presence, while Christian Science has a smaller, more traditional following primarily in the United States.

Are there controversies associated with Christian Science and Scientology?

Yes, both have faced controversies: Christian Science has been criticized for discouraging medical treatment, sometimes leading to preventable deaths,

while Scientology has been involved in numerous legal battles, allegations of abuse, and accusations of being a cult.

Additional Resources

Christian Science vs Scientology: An Investigative Comparison of Two Controversial Movements

christian science vs scientology often emerges as a topic of debate among scholars, religious observers, and the curious public. Both movements are relatively modern religious or spiritual systems that have sparked controversy, misunderstanding, and intrigue since their inception. Despite sharing a certain outsider status relative to mainstream religions, Christian Science and Scientology differ markedly in their origins, beliefs, practices, and social impact. This article explores these differences and similarities with a neutral, investigative lens, providing an informed perspective for those seeking to understand these unique faith-based movements.

Origins and Founders

Christian Science: Roots in 19th-Century America

Christian Science was founded in the late 19th century by Mary Baker Eddy, who published "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" in 1875. Eddy's teachings emphasized spiritual healing, the unreality of matter, and the power of prayer over physical ailments. Emerging from a milieu of religious revivalism and metaphysical exploration in New England, Christian Science positioned itself as a Christian-based movement, distinguishing itself by its rejection of traditional medical interventions in favor of divine healing.

Scientology: A 20th-Century Creation

In contrast, Scientology was established in the mid-20th century by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. His 1950 book, "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," laid the groundwork for Scientology's philosophy, which merges ideas about the mind, spirit, and self-improvement with a quasi-scientific approach. Scientology presents itself less as a religion in traditional terms and more as a system for personal development, though it later adopted religious trappings and structures, gaining recognition as a religion in various countries.

Core Beliefs and Doctrines

Christian Science Beliefs

Christian Science centers on the belief that reality is wholly spiritual and that the material world, including illness and death, is an illusion or a misperception. Followers adhere to the teachings of the Bible interpreted through Eddy's writings, especially regarding healing. The church encourages prayer and spiritual understanding as means to overcome physical and mental challenges. Healing testimonies are a central feature, and many adherents refuse conventional medical treatment, relying instead on Christian Science practitioners.

Scientology Beliefs

Scientology's doctrine is complex, incorporating concepts such as the "thetan" (immortal spiritual being), engrams (traumatic memories that negatively affect behavior), and auditing (a counseling process aimed at clearing engrams). Scientology posits that spiritual enlightenment and freedom can be achieved through a series of courses and levels, culminating in a state called "Clear." Unlike Christian Science's biblical foundation, Scientology draws heavily on Hubbard's writings and purported scientific principles, though it has been widely critiqued for lacking empirical support.

Practices and Community Life

Healing and Worship in Christian Science

The practice of healing through prayer is the hallmark of Christian Science. Services often include readings from the Bible and Eddy's texts, along with testimonies of healing. Christian Science practitioners are trained to assist others in spiritual healing. The church operates reading rooms and publishes periodicals to disseminate its teachings. The community tends to be tight-knit, with a strong emphasis on adherence to the founder's teachings and a cautious approach to modern medicine.

Auditing and Organizational Structure in Scientology

Scientology's core practice is auditing, a one-on-one session with an auditor

who uses an instrument called an E-meter to guide the individual through recalling and resolving past traumas. The church operates numerous missions, advanced centers, and elite organizations, with a highly structured hierarchy. Scientology is also known for its celebrity adherents and aggressive defense of its status and practices. The organization has been involved in various legal battles and controversies, some of which have influenced public perception significantly.

Controversies and Public Perception

Both Christian Science and Scientology have faced significant scrutiny, though the nature of the controversies differs.

- **Christian Science:** The most prominent criticism revolves around the refusal by some adherents to seek medical care for treatable illnesses, leading to legal and ethical debates about child welfare and medical neglect. Critics argue that reliance on prayer alone can endanger lives, while supporters claim successful healing and spiritual benefits.
- **Scientology:** Scientology has been embroiled in accusations of financial exploitation, harassment of critics, and secretive practices. Former members have spoken out about alleged abuses, and governments in several countries have questioned its religious status. Despite this, the church maintains a loyal following and significant global presence.

Philosophical and Theological Contrasts

Christian Science's theological framework is explicitly Christian, rooted in a reinterpretation of the Bible and focused on spiritual metaphysics. Its worldview rejects the material as illusory and promotes healing through faith.

Scientology, however, is more eclectic, combining elements of Eastern philosophy, psychology, and science fiction. It lacks a conventional deity figure and instead emphasizes self-empowerment through spiritual rehabilitation and mental clarity.

Approach to Science and Religion

The term "science" appears prominently in both names, but each movement's relationship to science differs markedly. Christian Science adopts a metaphysical interpretation of spiritual laws, emphasizing divine principles

over empirical evidence. Scientology attempts to present itself as a scientific discipline, though its methodologies and claims have not been validated by mainstream science.

Global Reach and Cultural Impact

Christian Science has historically been most influential in the United States, with a network of churches and institutions worldwide. It has impacted the discourse on faith healing and alternative medicine, contributing to broader conversations about spirituality and health.

Scientology has cultivated a more global footprint through celebrity endorsements and international missions. Its cultural impact extends beyond religion into areas such as self-help, leadership training, and celebrity culture. However, its public image remains polarizing, shaped by both advocacy and exposés.

Christian Science vs Scientology: Weighing the Differences

When weighing Christian Science vs Scientology, several key distinctions emerge:

1. **Foundational Basis:** Christian Science is a reinterpretation of Christian scripture, whereas Scientology is based on Hubbard's writings blending spirituality with pseudo-scientific concepts.
2. **Healing Practices:** Christian Science focuses on prayer and spiritual healing; Scientology employs auditing and mental counseling techniques.
3. **Organizational Structure:** Christian Science has a more traditional church hierarchy; Scientology features a highly structured, corporate-style organization.
4. **Public Controversies:** Christian Science controversies center on medical neglect; Scientology faces broader allegations including financial misconduct and aggressive litigation.
5. **Theological Orientation:** Christian Science aligns with Christian metaphysics; Scientology does not identify with any traditional religious framework.

This comparison highlights the unique paths these movements have taken,

reflecting different responses to questions of spirituality, healing, and human potential.

Christian Science vs Scientology debates will likely continue to intrigue scholars and practitioners alike, as both challenge conventional religious and scientific paradigms in their distinctive ways. Understanding their origins, teachings, and societal roles provides valuable insight into the diverse landscape of modern spiritual movements.

Christian Science Vs Scientology

christian science vs scientology: *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America* Mary Farrell Bednarowski, 1989-11-22 Bednarowski is especially good at elucidating the theological daring of these new American religions.... [She] demonstrates in a very few pages how... theology and group adherence made the individual count, a configuration simultaneously American, un-American, and important. -- Jon Butler The cultural confrontation with these 'new religions' is very real and usually very misinformed. Bednarowski has gone to great lengths to dispel the ignorance. -- The Christian Century A groundbreaking study. -- Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture Organized as a series of theological conversations about ultimate questions, this book offers a guide to the answers these six religions offer. Drawing heavily on sources from the movements themselves, it presents a balanced comparative account of the emerging theological systems of America's new religions.

christian science vs scientology: *Interpreting Religion at Museums and Historic Sites* Gretchen Buggeln, Barbara Franco, 2018-08-22 Interpreting Religion at Museums and Historic Sites encourages readers to consider the history of religion as integral to American culture and provides a practical guide for any museum to include interpretation of religious traditions in its programs and exhibits. Combining both theoretical essays and practical case studies from a wide cross section of the field, the book explores how museums are finding new ways to connect with audiences about this important aspect of American history. This book explores the practical and interpretive problems that museums encounter when they include religion in their interpretation: How do we make sure visitors don't think the museum is taking the side of any particular religious group, or proselytizing, or crossing church-state boundaries? How do we spin out a rich story with the available artifact base? What are the opportunities and perils of telling particular religious stories in a multicultural context? These and other questions are addressed in a series of interpretive essays and case studies that capture the experimental and innovative religion programming that is beginning to find a place in American history museums. An introduction by Gretchen Buggeln places the subject of religion and museums in the intellectual context of national and international scholarship. Case studies cover a range of topics and venues that include outdoor museums, historic houses and exhibits; interpretive issues of secular and sacred contexts; and interpretive techniques like dialogue, music and first person accounts. A concluding essay suggests a publicly oriented historiography of religion for American museums and historic sites.

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christian science vs scientology: *The Bodhisattva's Brain* Owen Flanagan, 2013-09-13 This fascinating introduction to the intersection between religion, neuroscience, and moral philosophy asks: Can there be a Buddhism without karma, nirvana, and reincarnation that is compatible with the rest of knowledge? If we are material beings living in a material world—and all the scientific

evidence suggests that we are—then we must find existential meaning, if there is such a thing, in this physical world. We must cast our lot with the natural rather than the supernatural. Many Westerners with spiritual (but not religious) inclinations are attracted to Buddhism—almost as a kind of moral-mental hygiene. But, as Owen Flanagan points out in *The Bodhisattva's Brain*, Buddhism is hardly naturalistic. In *The Bodhisattva's Brain*, Flanagan argues that it is possible to discover in Buddhism a rich, empirically responsible philosophy that could point us to one path of human flourishing. Some claim that neuroscience is in the process of validating Buddhism empirically, but Flanagan' naturalized Buddhism does not reduce itself to a brain scan showing happiness patterns. "Buddhism naturalized," as Flanagan constructs it, offers instead a fully naturalistic and comprehensive philosophy, compatible with the rest of knowledge—a way of conceiving of the human predicament, of thinking about meaning for finite material beings living in a material world.

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christian science vs scientology: *Culture and Diversity in the United States* Jack David Eller, 2015-05-15 Knowledge of and sensitivity toward diversity is an essential skill in the contemporary United States and the wider world. This book addresses the standard topics of race, ethnicity, class and gender but goes much further by engaging seriously with issues of language, religion, age, health and disability, and region and geography. It also considers the intersections between and the diversities within these categories. Eller presents students with an unprecedented combination of history, conceptual analysis, discussion of academic literature, and up-to-date statistics. The book includes a range of illustrations, figures and tables, text boxes, a glossary of key terms, and a comprehensive bibliography. Additional resources are provided via a companion website. Chapter 3 of this book is freely available as a downloadable Open Access PDF at <http://www.taylorfrancis.com> under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 license.

christian science vs scientology: San Diego Magazine , 2005-03 San Diego Magazine gives readers the insider information they need to experience San Diego—from the best places to dine and travel to the politics and people that shape the region. This is the magazine for San Diegans with a need to know.

christian science vs scientology: *The Myth of the Closed Mind* Ray Scott Percival, 2012 Religious zeal, suicide terrorism, passionate commitment to ideologies, and the results of various psychological tests are often cited to show that humans are fundamentally irrational. The author examines all such supposed examples of irrationality and argues that they are compatible with rationality. Rationality does not mean absence of error, but the possibility of correcting error in the light of criticism. In this sense, all human beliefs are rational: they are all vulnerable to being abandoned when shown to be faulty.

christian science vs scientology: The Rhetoric of Religious Cults A. Mooney, 2005-08-02 The Rhetoric of Religious Cults takes as its departure point the notion that 'cults' have a distinctive language and way of recruiting members. First outlining a rhetorical framework, which encompasses contemporary discourse analysis, the persuasive texts of three movements - Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses and Children of God - are analysed in detail and their discourse compared with other kinds of recruitment literature. Cults' distinctive negative profile in society is not matched by a linguistic typology. Indeed, this negative profile seems to rest on the semantics and application of the term 'cult' itself.

christian science vs scientology: *Psychological Clinical Science* Teresa A. Treat, Richard R. Bootzin, Timothy B. Baker, 2007 Psychological Clinical Science offers readers insightful appraisals of the most current theory and research in psychopathology and evidence-based intervention. It honors Richard McFall of Indiana University, a visionary psychological clinical scientist widely recognized for his unwavering advocacy for a science of clinical psychology and for the integration

of clinical psychology with other subdisciplines of psychological science. With the publication of this volume, Psychology Press and the Association for Psychological Science are launching jointly a series of festschrifts that honor the careers and contributions of distinguished psychological scientists. In keeping with McFall's integrative approach to psychological science, contributors to this volume include prominent clinical scientists, cognitive scientists, and neuroscientists. The book details the historical and epistemological underpinnings of psychological clinical science, addresses topics of applied significance, offers an overview of several model research programs, and suggests future directions in clinical science research, application, and training. An accompanying DVD contains an interview with McFall on his career and the clinical science movement, which provides an inspiring and fascinating glimpse of his perspective on the past, present, and future of psychological clinical science.

christian science vs scientology: Weltanschauung and Apologia Elias Hofer, 2022-10-11 This book allows us to accompany C. S. Lewis on his intellectual and spiritual journey from atheism to pantheism and eventually to Christianity. It analyzes key elements of Lewis's Christian worldview and identifies challenges leveled against it from alternative worldviews. It examines Lewis's apologetic methodology, highlighting how it was shaped by his worldview, and provides an analysis of Lewis's specific responses to a number of objections. The project also serves as a comparative analysis of worldviews, particularly as they relate to truth claims of the Christian faith. The notion of worldview is critical to the formulation of views. One's worldview determines how reality is perceived. It's characterized as a set of glasses through which we view our surroundings and interpret experiences. It accounts for the perspective we bring to every event in life and helps explain why different people "see" things differently when looking at the same data. The same evidence may lead one person to reject a particular conclusion, while moving another to embrace what the other rejected. Lewis's major works are explored at length in this book. Although much has been written about Lewis, Hofer's examination of the influence of worldview on his work is unique.

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christian science vs scientology: *Weird Earth* Donald R. Prothero, 2020-07-14 "A breath of intellectual fresh air . . . [an] amusing look at how to dispel endemic pseudoscience and conspiracy theories through rational thinking." —Publishers Weekly Aliens. Ley lines. Water dowsing. Conspiracies and myths captivate imaginations and promise mystery and magic. Whether it's arguing about the moon landing hoax or a Frisbee-like Earth drifting through space, when held up to science and critical thinking, these ideas fall flat. In *Weird Earth: Debunking Strange Ideas About Our Planet*, Donald R. Prothero demystifies these conspiracies and offers answers to some of humanity's most outlandish questions. Applying his extensive scientific knowledge, Prothero corrects misinformation that con artists and quacks use to hoodwink others about geology—hollow earth, expanding earth, and bizarre earthquakes—and mystical and paranormal happenings—healing crystals, alien landings, and the gates of hell. By deconstructing wild claims such as prophecies of imminent natural disasters, Prothero provides a way for everyone to recognize dubious assertions. Prothero answers these claims with facts, offering historical and scientific context in a light-hearted manner that is accessible to everyone, no matter their background. With a careful layering of evidence in geology, archaeology, and biblical and historical records, Prothero's *Weird Earth* examines each conspiracy and myth and leaves no question unanswered. *Weird Earth* is about the facts and the people who don't believe them. Don Prothero describes the process of science—and the process of not accepting it. If you're wondering if humans walked on the Moon, if you've wondered where the lost City of Atlantis went, or if you're wondering what your cat will do before an earthquake, check out *Weird Earth*." —Bill Nye

christian science vs scientology: *Social Science and the Cults* John A. Saliba, 2019-03-20 This book, first published in 1990, brings together descriptive, comparative, and theoretical materials on cults and sects in Western culture, focusing on literature published since 1970. A historical section links the rise of the new movements to similar past phenomena in Western culture. Other sections examine the methodology of studying religious movements and the various theories which have been brought to explain them, current studies on traditional sects that are sometimes compared to the new religions, and many studies of individual contemporary cults.

christian science vs scientology: *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* James R. Lewis, Inga B. Tollefsen, 2016-04-12 The study of New Religious Movements (NRMs) is one of the fastest-growing areas of religious studies, and since the release of the first edition of *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* in 2003, the field has continued to expand and break new ground. In this all-new volume, James R. Lewis and Inga B. Tollefsen bring together established and rising scholars to address an expanded range of topics, covering traditional religious studies topics such as scripture, charisma, and ritual, while also applying new theoretical approaches to NRM topics. Other chapters cover understudied topics in the field, such as the developmental patterns of NRMs and subcultural considerations in the study of NRMs. The first part of this book examines NRMs from a social-scientific perspective, particularly that of sociology. In the second section, the primary factors that have put the study of NRMs on the map, controversy and conflict, are considered. The third section investigates common themes within the field of NRMs, while the

fourth examines the approaches that religious studies researchers have taken to NRMs. As NRM Studies has grown, subfields such as Esotericism, New Age Studies, and neo-Pagan Studies have grown as distinct and individual areas of study, and the final section of the book investigates these emergent fields.

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Various, 2021-07-14 This set collects together in 19 volumes a wealth of texts on Sociology of Religion. An invaluable reference resource, it contains classic books on a wide range of topics, including: religion and violence, religion and family life, religion and society, culture and class.

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