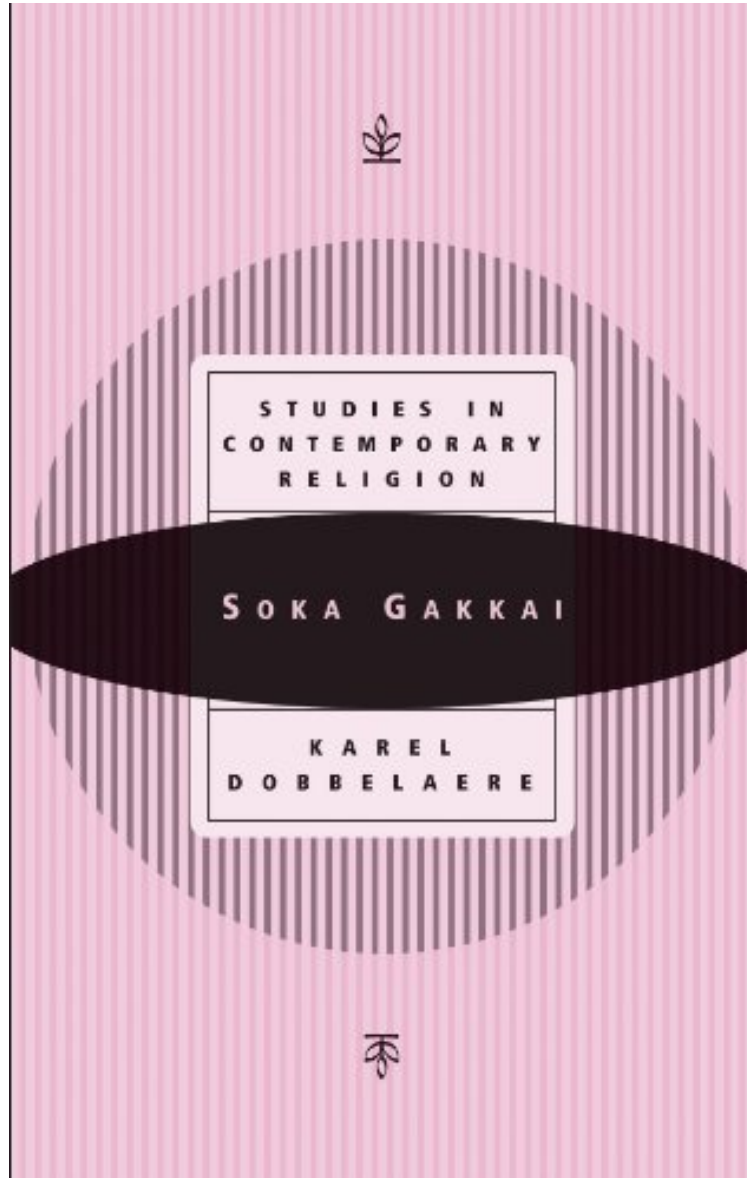


(Get free) Soka Gakkai: From Lay Movement to Religion (Studies in Contemporary Religion)

Soka Gakkai: From Lay Movement to Religion (Studies in Contemporary Religion)

Karel Dobbelaere

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Karel Dobbelaere : Soka Gakkai: From Lay Movement to Religion (Studies in Contemporary Religion) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soka Gakkai: From Lay Movement to Religion (Studies in Contemporary Religion):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A SOCIOLOGIST OF RELIGION LOOKS AT THIS JAPANESE

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

By Steven H Propp

Author Karel Dobbelaere (born 1933) is a Belgian educator and sociologist of religion, as well as an Emeritus Professor of both the University of Antwerp and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium. He also wrote books such as *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain*, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels (Gods, Humans Religion)*, etc. He explains in the first chapter of this 1998 book "Founder Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944)... formally converted to Nichiren Buddhism in 1928, specifically to the teachings of the Shoshu branch of Nichiren... In 1930 he and [Josei] Toda created a loosely organized group they called the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Educational Society for the Creation of Value)... Makiguchi continued his Buddhist beliefs and practices in prison during the war... It was his and his colleagues' opposition to the state religion and war that had resulted in their incarceration... Free from jail a year later in 1945, Josei Toda devoted himself to rebuilding the movement... Toda's intent was to capitalize on the solidarity of common citizens. In 1946 he renamed the association Soki Gakkai (Value-Creating Society...)... because of his fierce opposition to war, he devoted SG not only to the propagation of the Buddhist faith, based on Nichiren's teachings, but also to peace." (Pg. 1-3) He states, "In 1952 Soko Gakkai was legally registered in Japan as a religious organization. At first the high priests and monks of Nichiren Shoshu, presenting themselves as the sole defenders of the true religion, opposed this move. But since SG defined itself as a lay organization... the clerics eventually conceded. However, SG had to agree to a condition: that all members of SG would become active members of the local Shoshu temples." (Pg. 4) He observes, "SG is rare among new religious movements in Japan in its incursion into secular society. In a sense, SG adopts what has been a Christian precedent of creating a pillar of secular activity through parochial schools... The justification that SG sees for this... is its dedication... that religion should 'provide for the maximum growth and development of every individual.'" (Pg. 6-7) But he states, "the double structure of the movement ceased to function. In reality it had never been fully successful, except perhaps at the beginning when the SG membership was extremely small. SG seems to have reached the conclusion that the link with traditional monks was less critical than they had thought, especially as the movement expanded... SG leaders ceased to feel guilty about the conflicts. Nevertheless members... still felt a deep but abstract respect for the Shoshu clergy---monks who had kept the faith and practice for centuries, thus making it possible in 1930 to create SG---a fact which the high priests never failed to underline... in November 1991 the monks undertook a wholesale excommunication of SG members... [who were] excluded from pilgrimages to the main temple, this privilege being from then on reserved for Nichiren Shoshu members... of local temples." (Pg. 12-13) He says, "The concept of myoho ["Mystic Law" or "Ultimate Reality"] also makes possible the elucidation of the notion of reincarnation... Nichiren underlines the truth of the eternity of life... it corresponds to the idea that an individual's life is part of the universe considered as a whole... At death life continues in an invisible manner in the state of ku; it reappears later in the state of ke when conditions are ripe for the appearance of life... It is in this sense that one must understand the notion of nirvana: it is not the cessation of the cycle of births and deaths but the repetition of this cycle on earth in a state of enlightenment." (Pg. 23) He adds, "By reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, believers express their faith in the eternal aspect of life." (Pg. 25) He explains, "Soko Gakkai defines itself as a religious organization that promotes education and culture. Indeed, it is involved in educational, cultural, mass media, and even political fields, and its leaders seem to have understood that in a functionally differentiated society, the religious subsystem does not occupy a privileged position; it must prove its societal function through services rendered to other subsystems." (Pg. 59) He adds, "The goal of inter-religious dialogue ... became possible only after the break with Nichiren Shoshu, since monks refused dialogue with what they called 'false religions.'" (Pg. 65) He also notes, "SG is also engaged in politics in the more narrow, strict sense of the word." (Pg. 69) This is an objective and excellent introduction and orientation to this religious movement.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lay movement is sgi members who want to convert people ... By No name Lay movement is sgi members who want to convert people because they think that they have found a magic mirror that will grant them wished if they do. SGI seems nice on outside but it is just a deception. Millions have been duped. including myself. It is a brainwashing money scheming dangerous cult.

Why is Soka Gakkai one of the fastest-growing religions in the world today? Founded in post-World War II Japan, this Buddhist movement claims upwards of 15 million members, including more than a half million in North and South America. It sponsors two universities in the United States. Professor Dobbelaere points to several reasons for its growth. Soka Gakkai emphasizes inner peace rather than rules of behavior or hierarchical allegiance. Sociologists describe it as trans-modern, meaning that it blends ancient and contemporary sensitivities such as Buddhist mysticism, science, art and music, a concern for the environment, and social activism. Initially there was a reliance on aggressive proselyting, later replaced with a more moderate encouragement to share with friends. The movement now engages other faiths in cultural and intellectual exchanges and in pursuit of common ethical objectives. This adaptability and sincere concern for its membership and for society as a whole bode well for its future success.

This volume in Signature's Studies in Contemporary Religion series follows earlier books on Scientology and the Unification Church. Like its predecessors, it is noteworthy for its brevity and balanced approach to a controversial religious movement. Soka Gakkai ("Value-Creating Society"), an offshoot of Nichiren Buddhism that began in Japan

shortly before World War II, has become an international movement with several million members. It emphasizes the power of individuals to transform themselves and then promote peace and compassion in the world. Dobbelaere discusses recurring tensions between SG leaders and Nichiren monks, the differences in SG practices around the world, and the movement's educational and cultural institutions. --Publishers Weekly

From the Publisher This book is part of the Studies in contemporary Religion Series. The series editor is Massimo Introvigne. Other titles in this series are, *The Church of Scientology*, *Osho Rajneesh*, *The Unification Church*, *Baha'i*, *Hare Krishna* and *The Family*. Others to follow.

About the Author Karel Dobbelaere is an emeritus professor of sociology, Catholic University of Leuven and University of Antwerp, Belgium. He has been a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford University; at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya, Japan; at Sofia University in Tokyo; at the Institut de Recherche sur les Sociétés Contemporaines, Paris; and at Kent State University in Ohio. He is a former president of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion and is the author of some twenty books and nearly 200 articles published in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Polish.