

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in New Religious Movements

Series Editor

Rebecca Moore

*San Diego State University*

Founding Editor

†James R. Lewis

*Wuhan University*

## THE CHRISTIAN COUNTERCULT MOVEMENT

Douglas E. Cowan  
*Renison University College*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-05417-1 — The Christian Countercult Movement  
Douglas E. Cowan  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009054171](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009054171)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009053419

© Douglas E. Cowan 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions  
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take  
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-009-05417-1 Paperback  
ISSN 2635-232X (online)  
ISSN 2635-2311 (print)

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence  
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this  
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
remain, accurate or appropriate.

## The Christian Countercult Movement

Elements in New Religious Movements

DOI: 10.1017/9781009053419  
First published online: July 2023

---

Douglas E. Cowan  
*Renison University College*

**Author for correspondence:** Douglas E. Cowan, [decowan@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:decowan@uwaterloo.ca)

**Abstract:** Many seemingly strange questions on yoga, salvation, religious pluralism, and so forth have been actively debated among members of a small but influential group of evangelical apologists known as the Christian countercult movement. This Element explores the history of this movement from its origins in the anti-heresy writings of the early church to its modern development as a reaction to religious pluralism in North America. It contrasts the apologetic Christian countercult movement with its secular anticult counterpart and explains how faith-based opposition both to new religious movements and to non-Christian religions will only deepen as religious pluralism increases. It provides a concise understanding of the two principal goals of Christian countercult apologetics: support for the evangelization of non-Christian believers and maintenance for the perceived superiority of the evangelical Christian worldview.

**Keywords:** countercult, apologetics, cults, new religions, anticult

© Douglas E. Cowan 2023

ISBNs: 9781009054171 (PB), 9781009053419 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2635-232X (online), 2635-2311 (print)

## Contents

Introducing the Christian Countercult	1
1 The Christian Countercult in Historical Perspective	9
2 The Modern Countercult Movement in North America	22
3 Telling the Christian Countercult from the Secular Anticult	28
4 Reality-Maintenance and the Christian Countercult Movement	45
5 The Future of the Christian Countercult	54
References	58