



# **Bearing False Witness?: An Introduction to the Christian Countercult**

*Douglas E. Cowan*

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From Hare Krishna to the Latter-Day Saints, and from Jehovah's Witnesses to the New Age, religious pluralism in North America presents evangelical Protestantism with significant challenges. Declaring newer religious groups cults, aberrant sects, and heretical religions, the Christian countercult movement has warned that these groups represent a threat to society. In *Bearing False Witness?* Cowan considers the Christian countercult as a whole, locating it in sociological perspective as an entity distinct from the secular anti-cult. Through his analysis, the author argues that the primary purpose of the countercult movement is to reinforce and repair the Christian worldview when it appears threatened by the advent of alternative religious traditions. This unique analysis of the Christian countercult helps explain why conservative Christian responses to competing religious movements have taken the form that they have in addition to how those responses are carried out.

Unlike the anti-cult movement, which is concerned with removing individuals from cults and returning them to their families, the Christian countercult movement, according to the author, attempts not only to remove cultists from the negative influences of the cults to which they belong, but also to insure that they will join the particular version of Christianity adhered to by the countercultists themselves. Beginning with the countercult's early history, the author provides an historical account of the movement and its present activities. Since the rise of new religious movements, the growing interest in religions imported from outside North America, and the broadening of the religious marketplace continues to grow, understanding the Christian countercult and its presence as a countervailing pressure to these increasingly socioreligious dynamics becomes ever more important.

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