

Confidential Scriptures in Religions

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1. I am currently self-employed as a writer, editor, lecturer and consultant in the fields of theology and religion. I also serve as Adjunct Professor in Religious Studies at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

2. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy (1962) from Quincy University, Quincy, Illinois; a Bachelor of Divinity degree (1966), *magna cum laude*, from Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and a Ph.D. in Special Religious Studies (1981) from the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario. I have also done advanced study at Harvard University, the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and the University of Pennsylvania. At the University of Heidelberg, I was a Fulbright Fellow in Philosophy and Ancient Near Eastern Religions, 1966-67. At the University of Pennsylvania, I was a National Defense Foreign Language Fellow, Title VI, in Semitic languages, 1968-69.

3. Since 1962 I have devoted intense study to religious sectarian movements, ancient and modern. A portion of my doctoral studies was focussed specifically on the rise of new religious movements in the United States and abroad since World War II. That study included the investigation of new religions in terms of their belief system, lifestyles, use of religious language, leadership, motivation and sincerity, and the material conditions of their existence. I regularly teach a course "The North American Religious Experience" at Washington University, which contains a section on new religious movements. Besides a scholarly interest in religions I have had long-lasting personal experience with the religious life. From 1958 to 1964 I was a member of the Order of Friars Minor, popularly known as the Franciscans. During this period I lived under solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and, thus, experienced many of the disciplines typical of the religious life.

4. Prior to my present position, I taught at Maryville College, St. Louis, Missouri, 1980-81; St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1977-79, where I was Graduate Director of the Masters Program in Religion and Education; the University of Toronto, Ontario, 1976-77, where I was Tutor in Comparative Religion; St. John's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1970-75, where I was Tutor in the Great Books Program; LaSalle College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Summers 1969-73, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies and the Anthropology of Religion; Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, 1967-68, where I was a Lecturer in Biblical Studies; and Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Massachusetts, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies.

5. I am a member in good standing of the American Academy of Religion. I am a practicing Roman Catholic at All Saints Church, University City, Missouri.

6. Since 1968 I have lectured and written about various new religious movements which have arisen in the 19th and 20th centuries in North America and elsewhere. In my lecture courses "Anthropology of Religion" (LaSalle College), "Comparative Religion" (University of Toronto), "The American Religious Experience" (St. Louis University), and "The North American Religious Experience" (Washington University), I have dealt with such religious phenomena as the Great Awakening, Shakerism, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventism, Jehovah's Witness, New Harmony, Oneida, Brook Farm, Unification, Scientology, Hare Krishna, and others. I have published several articles and been general editor of books on the topic of new religions. It is my policy not to testify about a living religious group unless I have long-term, first-hand knowledge of that group. I have testified on various aspects of the new religions before the U.S. Congress, the Ohio Legislature, the New York Assembly, the Illinois Legislature, and the Kansas Legislature. I have delivered lectures on the topic of the

new religions at colleges, universities and conferences, in the United States, Canada, Japan, the Republic of China and Europe.

7. I have studied the Church of Scientology in depth since 1976. I have sufficiently sampled the vast literature of Scientology (its scriptures) to help form the opinions expressed below. I have visited Scientology Churches in Toronto, St. Louis, Portland, Oregon, Clearwater, Florida, Los Angeles, and Paris, where I have familiarized myself with the day-to-day workings of the Church. I have also conducted numerous interviews with members of the Church of Scientology. I am also familiar with most of the literature written about Scientology, ranging from objective scholarship to journalistic accounts, both favorable and unfavorable.

8. As a comparative scholar of religion, I maintain that for a movement to be a religion and for a group to constitute a church, it needs to manifest three characteristics, or marks, which are discernible in religions around the world. Below, I define these three characteristics:

A. First, a religion must possess a system of beliefs or doctrines which relate the believers to the ultimate meaning of life (God, the Supreme Being, the Inner Light, the Infinite, etc.);

B. Secondly, the system of beliefs must issue into religious practices which can be divided into 1) norms for behavior (positive commands and negative prohibitions or taboos) and 2) rites and ceremonies, acts and other observances (sacraments, initiations, ordinations, sermons, prayers, funerals for the dead, marriages, meditation, purifications, scriptural study, blessings, etc.);

C. Thirdly, the system of beliefs and practices must unite a body of believers or members so as to constitute an identifiable community which is either hierarchical or congregational in polity and which possesses a spiritual way of life in harmony with the ultimate meaning of life as perceived by the adherents.

Not all religions will emphasize each of these characteristics to the same degree or in the same manner, but all will possess them in a perceptible way.

9. On the basis of these three markers and of my research into the Church of Scientology, I can state without hesitation that the Church of Scientology constitutes a bona fide religion. It possesses all the essential marks of religions known around the world: (1) a well-defined belief system, (2) which issues into religious practices (positive and negative norms for behavior, religious rites and ceremonies, acts and observances), and (3) which sustain a body of believers in an identifiable religious community, distinguishable from other religious communities.

Confidential Teachings:

10. The question of “hidden” or “upper OT level” teachings in the Church of Scientology has often come up for debate. A number of things may be said about this topic.

11. First hidden teachings and information are part and parcel of everyday life. When corporations cloak their patents and research information in a veil of secrecy, this act is called “protecting company secrets.” It is even sanctioned by the law in all civilized societies. When nations cloak strategic information and national policies in a mantle of secrecy, it is called

“national security,” this is seen as a nation's fundamental right of self-preservation. When a friend conceals from a third party some unflattering information about a mutual friend, it is called “tact.” Tact preserves the well-functioning of social groups. When teachers conceal from students difficult materials they are not ready to comprehend, it is called “age-appropriate education.” Hence, it should come as no surprise at all that religion, too, has such things as hidden teachings or *doctrina arcana*.

12. Scholars of religion have recognized that from time immemorial hidden teachings and the protection of *sacra* (sacred objects) from profane eyes have been part and parcel of human religious experience. Among the primal peoples of the world — including Australian aborigines, North and South Amerindians, and African tribal peoples— the preservation of sacred myths, rituals and objects from “profanation,” i.e., their discovery by the uninitiated, is in full force. Taboos of secrecy also surround the knowledge, tales, and rites attached to entry into sacred societies, such as medicine people, shamans, seers and healers. A remnant of such secrecy is associated with various fraternal orders, such as the Masons and Elks, both of which had religious origins.

13. Both Judaism and Christianity preserved traditions of hidden teachings. The doctrines and spiritual disciplines contained in the Jewish *Zohar* and other kabbalistic writings were and are kept out of the hands of neophytes and those deemed unable or unworthy of the knowledge they contain. In early Christianity catechumens or neophytes were allowed to attend Mass only up to the reading of the Gospel. The liturgy surrounding the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and the partaking of the sacred elements was deemed too sacred for uninitiated eyes and ears. Even today various traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy conceal the consecration liturgy from attendee's eyes. Until very recently the Roman Catholic Church forbade the translation of the *Code of Canon Law* from Latin into the vernacular lest translations lead to confusion and misinterpretation among the faithful.

14. Concealment of religious teachings is very common in religious instruction. Even a convert to Catholicism is not given full instruction into the mysterious intricacies of the doctrine of the Trinity. Religious educators have long recognized that one cannot just transmit esoteric religious doctrine willy-nilly. Six and seven year-olds are not presented with Jesus' seemingly harsh injunction: “If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out.” The young and neophytes of all ages tend to interpret religious teaching in a literal and instrumental way. They cannot grasp right away the hidden symbolic meaning behind Jesus' aphorism, namely, purity of intention. Wholesale revelation of higher level truths may even be destructive of a person's growth in faith.

15. Great religious teachers in the past have often taught that certain doctrines are to be withheld until the person is able to receive them in the context of a maturer faith. Jesus himself instructed his disciples to keep hidden his messianic status: “Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one he was the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20). Similarly Gautama Buddha instructed his disciples not to reveal the higher levels of enlightenment to those unfit to absorb them. To this day the secret teachings contained in mystical Tantric Buddhism in Tibet and Japan are withheld from all but the most adept devotees. Gurus and swamis in India often withhold the higher levels of teaching and discipline from all but the most learned and prepared. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, St. Paul says that he has fed his flock “with milk, not solid food” because they were not ready for it. In Chapter 8 of the same Epistle he asks more advanced believers to refrain from eating food consecrated to pagan idols, although their Christian “higher knowledge” tells them it is perfectly permissible to do so, but because eating it might prove a scandal to those less firm in their faith.

16. In the Church of the Latter-day Saints, known as the Mormons, believers are not allowed to partake in a Temple marriage and in instruction in the Church's upper level sacraments until and unless they have received sufficient lower level training in the faith and have proven that they have dutifully paid a tithing on a tenth of their income throughout their church membership. The Mormon Church goes on to every possible length to preserve the knowledge of these teachings and rituals, not only from outsiders but also from uninitiated members of the Church itself. Those teachings pertain to the metaphysical foundations of the faith and apocalyptic expectations of the future which neophytes would find hard to comprehend.

17. Seen in light of the discussion above, the desire of the Church of Scientology to protect the teachings associated with “upper OT levels” from profane purview accords fully with normal religious practices throughout time and the world. The Church has always been consistent about this practice. The practice of withholding upper level teachings harmonizes completely with Scientology doctrine about ascending “The Bridge” in a graduated manner. In general the upper level teachings have to do with the basis of the Church's faith, including the origin of the soul as a *thetan* or spirit, the entanglement of the spirit in the material universe, and the rediscovery and recovery of its supernatural powers. Some outsiders decry that the Church withholds this information for financial reasons. Such deprecations fail to recognize the ordinary realities of human existence, including religious human existence. If religion has a right to exist — and the First Amendment of the United States Constitution makes every indication that it does — then it has a right to survive. If it has a right to survive, then it has a right to attain the means to survive, including asking its members to offer fees or tithes for various levels of services and instruction in a manner appropriate to that faith.

18. Some outsiders also declaim that there is something underhanded about having secret sacred teachings. On the other hand these same scoffers are willing [to] grant a corporation its right to hold onto it[s] “trade secrets” and protect them with every legal means possible, while denying the same to religion. But if secular institutions have a right to protect their patents and trade secrets from outside use, then *a fortiori* — given the privileged status of religion in the Constitution — a religious institution, such as the Church of Scientology or the Church of Latter-day Saints, has every right and even duty to protect its “trade secrets,” namely its innermost sacred teachings and rites, and to transmit them in the way it deems fit in accord with its faith.

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