

Expertise
on
Confidential
Religious Writings

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I am a professor of sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA and the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. My primary area of teaching and research is sociology of religion, with a specialization in religious movements.

I am currently the editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, published by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and editor of *Religion and the Social Order*, an annual serial published by the Association for the Sociology of Religion. I am immediate past-president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion and a member of the Executive Councils of both the Association for the Study of Religion and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

In my primary research area I have authored or edited fourteen books and more than fifty articles in professional publications. Representative publications include the following: *Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, 2 volumes (JAI Press, 1993); *Krishna Consciousness in the West*, (Bucknell University Press, 1988); *Falling from the Faith: The Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, (SAGE Publications, 1988); *The Future of New Religious Movements*, (Mercer University Press, 1987); *Strange Gods: The Great American Cult Scare*, (Beacon Press, 1981). In the course of my research on religious movements I have studied and written about the theology and organization of the Church of Scientology as a prominent example of a contemporary religious movement.

Secrecy in the form of restricted access is an important element of numerous types of social organization. Familiar examples of restricted access include signs, rites, and doctrines in masonic organizations and college fraternities/sororities; advanced katas in martial arts practitioner groups; security clearances in governmental and military organizations; and formulas and processes constituting “trade secrets” in corporate organizations. Further, access to restricted sites or materials frequently is graded. In granting security clearances, for example, the principle of “need to know” typically is invoked. Finally, access tends to be based on such principles as organizational loyalty or having acquired sufficient context for appropriate understanding and use of restricted information. For example, in professional socialization practices in medicine, law, and religion organizational loyalty is inculcated before new practitioners are given access to knowledge that ostensibly altruistic actions of the profession actually serve to maintain the legitimacy of existing authority and organization. Given the pervasiveness of such practices in secular organizations, it is not surprising that similar restricted access is found in a variety of religious organizations.

The richness and diversity of religious expression in the United States is quite extraordinary. At present the best estimate is that there are approximately nine hundred religious groups representing various strands of Judeo-Christian tradition and another seven hundred groups representing a broad range of alternative traditions. Religious traditions differ significantly in terms of their restriction of access to various portions of their belief systems, locations where sacred materials are stored, or sites at which rituals are performed.

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition there are numerous instances of restricted access. In Catholicism novitiates in some religious orders traditionally were barred from certain areas of convents/monasteries and learned details of some confessional practices only when they reached more advanced status. In the early days of Christian Science, that church's founder/leader offered advanced class lessons containing confidential teachings only to privileged insiders and charged a substantial fee for participation in those classes. In Mormonism, the temple ceremony is regarded as extremely private and its substance as highly

confidential; those practitioners granted access are pledged to secrecy, and violators of confidentiality can be excommunicated.

Outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition a number of religious groups protect portions of their belief systems. In various elements of the Hindu tradition, for example, the guru strives to become a “perfect master” who functions as a teacher, imparting to pupils knowledge of spiritual techniques and mystic reality. Similar traditions are found in Buddhism. Often in these traditions sacred teachings are not written but are available only from the spiritual teacher who imparts them to pupils as their spiritual growth and level of spiritual understanding permits.

In the “ancient wisdom” traditions, such as Rosicrucianism and Theosophy, spiritual leaders are regarded as bearers of long-hidden wisdom that has recently been rediscovered. The teacher imparts this secret knowledge to pupils as the teacher determines that the pupil is prepared to accept and able to understand the more advanced teachings. Analogous practices are found in various elements of the contemporary, highly diverse New Age movement.

In a number of religions inside and outside of the Judeo-Christian heritage, then, teachings are divided into those publicly available and those available only to practitioners. Among practitioners there often is a ranking of statuses that involves differential access to advanced, core teachings as well as to spiritual rituals and exercises. Practitioners granted access to these inner-circle doctrines normally are pledged not to disclose them to outsiders. Religious groups may impose such restrictions for several reasons: because the teachings are so discontinuous with conventional belief that out of context, public revelation will provoke ridicule of sacred beliefs, because only practitioners with a prior basis and context of knowledge can have an appropriate appreciation and understanding of the doctrines, or because offering the teachings to practitioners is one means by which the religious organization sustains itself economically.

The offering of privileged doctrines and accompanying rituals/exercises for a fee also is not uncommon in a variety of religious groups. Buddhist temples, for example, routinely post fee lists at the entrance to the temples. In some parts of the Jewish tradition an annual fee is paid for synagogue membership. Historically, ministers in a number of protestant demoninations have performed marriage and funeral rites on a fee-for-service basis, and Catholic priests similarly have offered various masses for a specified fee.

In sum, then, neither the privileging of certain portions of religious doctrine nor the association of a monetary fee for access to doctrines and associated rites is in any sense unique to the Church of Scientology. With respect to the Church of Scientology, it is clear that the material at issue in this case, the advanced OT level doctrines, constitutes an integral component of the church's sacred scripture. The Church of Scientology appropriately maintains the confidentiality of those scriptures and restricts access to those practitioners who have been initiated to receive them. The church may well seek to preserve the confidentiality of such material on the basis that public revelation of this material out of context will precipitate misunderstanding of the church's nature and mission, that unrestricted access will lead to inappropriate use or have harmful consequences for uninitiated practitioners, and that unauthorized distribution would compromise the economic foundation of the church organization. In his case all of these concerns would appear to be justified. Finally, it is difficult to identify other motives for the gratuitous introduction of these materials into the court record in this case other than infliction of injury on the Church of Scientology.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed at Richmond, Virginia, this 28th day of November, 1994.

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