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# FREEDOM

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# Is Bad Research and Prejudice "Academic Freedom"?



Dawson also points out that "[Kent's] efforts are designed to encourage and facilitate the introduction of new legal sanctions and restrictions on minority religions in North America and elsewhere."

Dawson's reference to "elsewhere" would include Kent's activities in Germany — activities which have gained him a "hired gun" reputation and the increased alienation of many of his mainstream colleagues.

While professional scholars often produce expertises or studies for a modest honorarium or other recompense of their time, it is Kent's choice of clients and venues that is being closely scrutinized.



**AFFILIATION WITH HATE CRIMINALS:** Members of the academic community question whether the activities of University of Alberta faculty member Stephen Kent (top) have now overridden professionalism and objectivity. Of concern is Kent's close affiliation with a U.S. anti-religious hate group, LM Trust, headed and funded by ex-financier Robert Minton (left in a mug shot after an arrest for assault). Various members of the Trust have been in trouble for their anti-religious activities, including Keith Henson (above, being arrested in Los Angeles) who is currently a fugitive from justice, fleeing the U.S. following a religious hate crime conviction. Another is J. Prince, a Trust employee, with a multiple arrest record (right).

Professor Dawson reviewed several of Kent's papers on the subject and concluded that the "essays suffer from methodological flaws so grievous as to call into question the validity and reliability of Kent's conclusions, in fact the methodological inadequacies detected are indicative of a prejudice inappropriate to the practice of the social sciences."

Concerned with the unethical nature of Kent's work, Professor

He recently has been sought out by extremist elements in the German government for his "scholarly" expertise at attacking religions. Responding to their call, he has served not as an impartial observer, but more in the capacity of a paid apologist attacking targeted religions these officials disagree with. The fact the German government has been repeatedly criticized or sanctioned for its discriminatory policies and actions toward religions within its borders — not only by the U.S. State Department and the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, but also the International Helsinki Federation, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and a host of others — apparently hasn't fazed Kent's support of their dubious cause.

It is readily apparent from Professor Dawson's paper that he views Kent's work more as "activism" than scholarship.

Various members of the academic community question whether Kent has overridden academic professionalism and

objectivity.

Freedom found that Kent has had close affiliation to the "LM Trust," a U.S. anti-religious, for-profit hate group founded and funded by American ex-financier Robert Minton, who has been arrested twice in the U.S. for assaults on religious workers. Minton has been under investigation by Swiss authorities for his role in orchestrating an allegedly fraudulent debt-buy-back scheme that made him a multi-millionaire, and he has been in the sights of German law enforcement investigating an alleged bribe he made to a Hamburg official, apparently to increase political activities against a religious minority.

Minton and the LM Trust have bankrolled one of their advisory board members, Keith Henson, who is now a fugitive from justice; Henson fled the U.S. mid-2001 after being convicted of a hate crime against a religion. The Trust has also funded associate and one-time advisory board member Gerald Armstrong — another fugitive, who faces arrest and hundreds of thousands of dollars in court-imposed fines in the U.S. following scurrilous attacks on a religious minority.

The LM Trust is documented to have made at least one payment of \$2,500 US to the University of Alberta; only days later, Kent was found in Germany, working with Robert Minton and the Hamburg official Minton allegedly bribed.

## "Hired Gun"

Kent has demanded up to \$200 US per hour to produce legal affidavits for court cases against minority religions and during the 1990s, some of Kent's work was funded by a now-defunct anti-religious hate group in the United States.

True to the attributes of a hired gun — expert for sale to the highest bidder — Kent's expert opinions are apparently pretty pliable. Recently, he was caught out in a blatant contradiction in his own testimony on such a fundamental issue as whether a group is religious or not. In one court case, Kent wrote that the primary services of a group he had studied were religious — as that suited the purposes of an employee complaint for religious discrimination. Yet in another case, he reversed himself and asserted that these same services were not religious — as in this case, such testimony suited a claim that the group should not be entitled to protections afforded religions under the law.

Some officials at the University of Alberta have chosen to defend Kent's research, findings and activism within the realm of "academic freedom". While scholars might have the right to express controversial ideas and encourage healthy debate, when dishonest and biased research is coupled with political activism, academic freedom has been compromised and violated — especially when discrimination and intolerance is the avowed goal. While free to say what he chooses, Kent should not be given the imprimatur of the university to spin his prejudicial message of hatred.

Professor Dawson's conclusions, as well as some of the other academics in this new book, should be well studied by Canadians interested in safeguarding and advancing tolerance and peace in our country.

New book examines a source of religious intolerance in Canada's academia

Canadian political and community leaders are concerned over the recent backlash of intolerance and hatred towards the Islamic community with acts of violence targeting mosques and members of the South Asian community dramatically increasing. They are shocked and embarrassed that in Canada, a country that has promoted and dedicated itself to 'multiculturalism', such hostility and prejudice has surfaced.

Muslims are being targeted by a bigoted few who misrepresent Islam, ignoring its tradition as a religion of peace.

The intolerance now raising its ugly head reminds us that tolerance is not a passive activity — but requires consistent action to promote its ideals and to isolate and root out sources of bias and hatred before they lead to or inspire more harmful acts.

What is often missed is that the malevolence of those promoting intolerance and hate does not restrict itself to only one religion, such as Islam, but tends to span a wide range of beliefs and religious practices — since such people are

mainly anti-religious in sentiment.

It is an affliction that unfortunately infects society through disinformation spread by those bigoted few preying on the insecurities and fears of the misinformed.

That is the pivotal point stressed in a newly published book by the University of Toronto Press entitled "Misunderstanding Cults", edited by sociologists Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins. The book contains several important essays on the subject of the treatment, or mistreatment, of minority religions.

Among them is the revealing paper of sociologist Lorne Dawson, chair of Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo, who excoriates the research methodology and motivations of one Stephen Kent, a professor of sociology at the University of Alberta, in an article entitled "Raising Lazarus". Kent has come under fire in the academic community several times in recent years due to his faulty research and repeated, one-sided attempts to scandalize new or minority religions.

## Scientology — Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion

*Scientology — Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion* is a new book which fully explains the doctrines of the Scientology religion and the activities of those who adhere to them.

To place the religious principles of Scientology in context, the book begins with an analysis and explanation of what religion really is — providing a workable, complete and authoritative definition.

The book provides a detailed description of all fundamental aspects of

Scientology including the ecclesiastic structure of the Church of Scientology, its services and ceremonies and the many social and community activities it sponsors internationally.

In demand since the day it was published, the book is also fast becoming a fundamental text for teaching the subject of religion.

Complimentary copies are available to religious leaders, government officials and members of the news media. Please call 416-925-1779.

