

COPYRIGHTING GOD

Copyrighting God provides the first detailed account of how American religious organizations used copyright in sacred texts not simply for economic gain but also for social organization and control. Including chapters on the angelic authorship of *The Urantia Book*, Mary Baker Eddy's use of copyright to construct the Christian Science Church, interdenominational disputes in the Worldwide Church of God, and the Church of Scientology's landmark lawsuits against Internet service providers, this book examines how religious copyright owners mobilized the law in order to organize communities, protect sacred goods, produce new forms of spiritual identity, and even enchant the material world. In doing so, this book demonstrates that these organizations all engaged in complex efforts to harmonize legal arguments and theological rationales in order to care for and protect religious media, thereby coming to a nuanced understanding of secular law as a resource for, and obstacle to, their unique spiritual objectives.

Andrew Ventimiglia is a research fellow in the TC Beirne School of Law at the University of Queensland. He works in the areas of legal history, religious studies, and media studies, with a research focus on the history and cultural effects of intellectual property law. Ventimiglia was awarded a PhD in Cultural Studies from the University of California, Davis, in 2015. He also holds an MA in Cinema Studies and a certificate from the Culture and Media Program at New York University. Ventimiglia's work has appeared and is forthcoming in *Cultural Critique* and the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42051-8 — Copyrighting God
Andrew Ventimiglia
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Copyrighting God

OWNERSHIP OF THE SACRED IN AMERICAN RELIGION

Andrew Ventimiglia

TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42051-8 — Copyrighting God
Andrew Ventimiglia
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, 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
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108420518

DOI: 10.1017/9781108349444

© Andrew Ventimiglia 2019

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.

First published 2019

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ventimiglia, Andrew, author.

Title: Copyrighting God : ownership of the sacred in American religion / Andrew Ventimiglia, University of Queensland TC Beirne School of Law.

Description: New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018022367 | ISBN 9781108420518

Subjects: LCSH: Copyright infringement – United States – History. | Intellectual property – United States – History. | Religious institutions – Law and legislation – United States – History. | Religious minorities – Legal status, laws, etc. – United States. | Actions and defenses – United States. | Religion and law – United States.

Classification: LCC KF3080 .V46 2018 | DDC 346.7304/82–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018022367>

ISBN 978-1-108-42051-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-43037-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press 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

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | <i>page</i> vi |
| Introduction: Owning the Sacred | 1 |
| Part I The Angelic Author and the Sacred Work. | 41 |
| 1 Spirited Possessions: The Sacred Work of Copyright Law | 47 |
| 2 The Angels' Share: Divining Sacred Authorship in the Courtroom | 78 |
| Part II The Doctrines of Religion and Law | 111 |
| 3 Authorship and Authority in Intellectual Property: The Copyright Activism of Mary Baker Eddy | 115 |
| 4 A Market in Prophecy: Secular Law and the Economy of American Religious Publishing | 150 |
| 5 Digital Liability and the Church of Scientology: Copyright, Secrecy, and Human Agency Online | 178 |
| Conclusion: The Afterlife of Intellectual Property | 211 |
| <i>References</i> | 221 |
| <i>Index</i> | 242 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has benefited from the efforts of a number of people who helped shepherd this work to its completion over the course of nearly a decade of research and writing. First, I would like to thank in particular Mario Biagioli, Ari Kelman, and Brad Sherman, all of whom have read numerous drafts and worked incredibly hard in various capacities during my time as a graduate student at University of California, Davis and then as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Queensland. This book bears the significant intellectual traces of each of these interlocutors and to them I am incredibly grateful. I would also like to thank the many other individuals who have helped me develop this project in various ways. Mark Elmore, Allison Fish, and Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli have all been instrumental to the project's development at key points. I would also like to thank Alden Adkins, Brian Britt, Sarah Barringer Gordon, Toni Lester, Kathryn Lofton, John Lardas Modern, Kurt Morris, Paul St. Amour, Carolyn Homer Thomas, and Amy Voorhees for substantive comments and conversations on sections or chapters of the book. Many thanks to the staff of the Mary Baker Eddy Library – including Sherry Darling, Jonathon Eder, Russel Fogg, and Judith Huenneke – and its generous fellowship program which allowed me to conduct research on Christian Science and copyright in the summer of 2015. Thanks to the Davis Humanities Institute and the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation's Charlotte W. Newcomb Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for key funding support. Thanks also to Chuck Thurston and the San Francisco Urantia Book Study Group who welcomed me into their community well before I understood exactly what *The Urantia Book* was.

Acknowledgments

vii

I also owe many thanks to the various venues, societies, and institutions that have given me the opportunity to present my work in various stages of completion. Thanks in particular to the Law and Humanities Junior Scholars Workshop, the International Society for the History and Theory of Intellectual Property, and the American Academy of Religion's Religion and Media Workshop, all of which provided excellent fora in which to receive generous feedback from participants that helped enrich my project. Thanks also to the staff and faculty of the University of California, Davis Cultural Studies Program – particularly Robert Irwin, Caren Kaplan, and Eric Smoodin – for providing an open-ended yet intellectually rigorous interdisciplinary environment in which to develop an idiosyncratic project such as this one. Thanks also to colleagues and faculty at University of California – Davis including Tim Choy, Allison Coudert, Joe Dumit, Grace Wang, Meaghan O'Keefe, Mairaj Syed, and Archana Venkatasan for support and encouragement along the way. Thanks also to my Cultural Studies cohort (Team Structure of Feeling): Megan Bayles, Hilary Berwick, Andrea Dooley, Karl Zoller, and honorary member Sampada Aranke. Thanks as well to current colleagues and staff at the University of Queensland who have given me the space and opportunity to finish this book. And thanks to my editor at Cambridge University Press, Matt Gallaway, for setting the timelines that helped push the book to completion. Finally, and most importantly, thanks to Erin and Adrian: Erin for the strength, encouragement, and support to finish this work; Adrian for teaching me when to put it away.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42051-8 — Copyrighting God
Andrew Ventimiglia
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
