

SUNDAY, July 1, 1984

Readers object to story's reference to 'confession'

The ink had hardly cooled on my "ombudsman" title Monday when I received phone calls in quick succession from two persons who objected to a reference in a Sunday (June 24) story about Scientology.

In the story, staff writer George-Wayne Shelor wrote that the Scientology procedure known as auditing is "somewhat similar to Catholic confession."

My two callers took exception to that. One pointed out that Roman Catholic confession makes no use of electronic devices such as Scientology's "E-meter." The other objector noted that confession is a one-way procedure, while auditing involves conversation between two persons.

I have thought about this item and talked to other persons about it. The result is my following two-faceted opinion.

A. I can readily understand the objections of my two callers, especially since the comparison Shelor made involved an organization (Scientology) that many people feel is not a religion at all.

B. I don't think Shelor's comparison was wrong or inaccurate. He doubly qualified his comparison by saying auditing was "somewhat similar" to confession. And he's correct. There *is* a rough similarity between confession and audit-

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ing, in that both seek to verbalize sins or shortcomings that are troublesome to the person involved.

If a universal lesson can be drawn from this item, it is that readers are often sensitive to religious allusions, even accurate ones.