

Scientology: Salvation on Sale

'Remember; wherever there's a deep human need, there's money to be made.'

— Eric Idle, Nuns on the Run

Chances are, you've heard of the 'Church of Scientology'. Is that the religion that Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman are in? Yes, that's true. A 'crazy' Christian sect like the Jehovah's Witnesses? No, they may be crazy but they're certainly not Christian. Perhaps you've passed them on the street and been invited inside for a 'free personality test'?

The 'Church' Scientology often claims to have over 5 million members world-wide, and although the real figure is sure to be much lower, it is still a successful and active organisation. Scientologists can be found in Australian cities as well as those throughout the world, particularly in the US and the Commonwealth. They represent themselves as a religion, hence a non-profit (and, significantly, tax-free) organisation, but nothing could be further from the truth. If you can't come up with the cash, your path to spiritual happiness will be blocked, as we shall see.

LRH

'The evidence portrays a man who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background and achievements.' — Judge Paul A. Breckenridge of the L.A. County Superior Court (Jacobsen and Day, What the Church of Scientology Doesn't Want You To Know.)

To understand the 'Church', one must have some knowledge of its guru and founder, L. Ron Hubbard, known affectionately as LRH by his followers. Scientology began with the publishing of Hubbard's book, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* in 1950. This book told how one's mental and physical problems could be solved through the revolutionary process of 'auditing' (a form of counselling), through which 'engrams' (stored memories of past trauma responsible for one's ills) could be removed. This book sold well, and because of this success, its teachings became the basis of a cult which was to become Hubbard's personal empire.

Much of Hubbard's personal history is uncertain, but what is known is that most of what he described as anecdotes of his past experiences were pure fantasy. Learning about Hubbard himself forms no small part of Scientology's teaching and a student will learn much about Hubbard's time as test-pilot, wartime naval commander, US Intelligence officer, and leader of many and varied expeditions and adventures. In reality, Hubbard had a glider license and a stint in the US Navy with a dishonourable discharge and psychological treatment. It seems that Hubbard could not resist an opportunity to spin glamorous tales about his own history. Hubbard put this talent to use and did enjoy some success as a science-fiction writer, an occupation which has left a startlingly obvious legacy in his religious teachings.

His post-Dianetics life was an interesting but strange one. A mysterious seclusion and death, and years spent cruising around the Mediterranean with a shipful of the faithful. His own son remembers him as a 'broke science-fiction writer' who espoused that the road to riches and glory lay in selling religion to the masses (From a Penthouse interview with Ron Hubbard, Jr). It would almost seem comical if it weren't for the effect this would-be Messiah had on so many people's lives.

The Bridge to Freedom

'I'd like to indicate that your needle is floating. This is the end of the session. You can put down the cans.' — Margery Wakefield, The Road to Xenu

An important aspect of Scientology is its stratified nature. On the road to mastery of the technology of Scientology, there is a strict path of courses and accomplishments that must be followed. This ascension through the ranks is called by the Church the 'Bridge to Freedom'.

About 10% of the church's recruits come from off the streets. The ploy of inviting passers-by to come in for a free 'personality test' is often successful, and this can be the first step up the bridge. In any case, it won't be long before a potential candidate has his or her first auditing session. A combination of being audited and learning how to conduct audits oneself forms the basis of Scientological indoctrination.

by Colin Jacobs

An auditing session is a one-on-one encounter with a church member higher up the bridge, who will sit you, the 'Pre-clear', down, place two cans in your hands, and proceed to psychoanalyse you with the aid of a miraculous machine called an 'E-meter', to which the cans are attached. The E-meter, a holy artefact of Scientology, has a needle which (according to the church) enables them to see what you are feeling and when you have freed yourself from a troublesome engram. Eventually, after enough auditing, the aim is to achieve the status of 'Clear'.

The goal of an auditing session is to get your needle to 'float'; that is, move back and forth across the dial, unperturbed by the questions asked you by the auditor. Achieving a floating needle is accomplished by working through a trauma and eliminating its effects by mentally arriving at its source and coming to terms with it. The validity of the process is often demonstrated by giving the subject a surprise pinch and showing them how the needle jumps to the right; then, the auditor will ask the subject to 'remember the pinch', and again, a small jump will be observed. This is the engram of the traumatic pinch manifesting itself. Sounds bizarre?

In fairness, it should be pointed out here that there is some evidence to suggest that auditing can have positive effects, and may well help some people cope with stressful memories and tension. Sadly, the positive effects of auditing may be the reason so many people are drawn into the Church's higher levels and may serve to give the 'org' (organisation in Scientology-speak) some credibility. However, the process does not stop there.

Apart from auditing, exercises called 'Training Routines' (TRs) must be performed. These amazing sessions are ostensibly designed to make a better auditor, and include sitting impassively without moving or blinking for several hours and being cruelly taunted by your peers until you no longer react.

So, what happens once you become a Clear? Well, then a new vista opens up before you. Your 'Thetan' (equivalent to the soul) comes into play. The OT (Operating Thetan) levels are now open to you — if you have the cash.

Religion as a Commodity

'If you want to make a million, start a new religion.'

— George Orwell, Collected Essays

'Dianetics and Scientology are trademarks of the Religious Technology Centre, Inc.' This delightful postscript can be found on a lot of Church literature, and gives a good indication about the true commercial nature of Scientology. All aspects of the 'religion' are copyrighted or otherwise protected — some even as 'trade secrets', including the details of the OT levels. This, one cannot help but notice, is in stark contrast to other religions, who spend extraordinary amounts of time actively spreading the doctrines of their faith.

One of the most controversial aspects of Scientology is its financial cost to its adherents. From your first visit to an org you will probably find yourself signing up for expensive courses. Although the first one or two may be relatively cheap, the cost of auditing soon skyrockets. Soon, thousands of dollars are being charged for you to learn the 'tech' — and that's what it is, 'religious technology' being aggressively marketed. According to What the Church of Scientology Doesn't Want you to Know by Jacobsen and Day,

The average cost of the 82 courses listed in the Catalogue of Services is \$1600. In the 1988 catalogue 12 hours of auditing costs \$3224 with a free 6 month membership in IAS (International Association of Scientologists). The bills can pile up fast. It is estimated that the average cost to become a Clear today is around \$400,000.

The price gets even steeper once a member reaches the OTs. Some have spent literally millions reaching the highest levels.

It becomes even more serious when the less affluent member becomes indebted to the Church. Many will find themselves trapped in contracts which let them take many hours of auditing for free, payable on leaving the org. The choice then is between staying in the Church which has been your life for several years or leaving and being taken to court by the law-suit happy org for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The question is, then, does the Church have the right to keep its secrets, and sell them to those that want to pay for them?

The Right to Freedom of Religion

'One must be careful to distinguish between the right to believe the earth is flat and the right to charge people large sums of money to jump off the edge.' — Stewart Lamont, Religion, Inc: The Church of Scientology

This is an issue that must be considered when damning the teachings of a religion, whatever its tenets. Freedom of worship is one of the basic human rights we take for granted in this country, and many of us would get concerned if the government was seen to be persecuting a religious order.

So where does Scientology fit in? The 'Church' goes to great lengths to establish itself as a bona-fide religion in the minds of the public and government officials. Yet the organisation is most often described as a 'cult' by ex-members and academics studying the org. Certainly, the way in which members are led to devote themselves to the Church and to Hubbard — at the expense of their families and personal lives — is suggestive of a cult; including the way ex-members often have to be 'deprogrammed' after leaving.

In the mid sixties, several governments around the world were looking to investigate the church, unsure as to whether the org was welcome within their borders. The investigation that went the furthest (and created the most concern for the Church) was a report by Kevin Anderson QC, conducted in Victoria, in 1965.

'Scientology is evil; its techniques evil; its practice a serious threat to the community, medically, morally and socially, and its adherents are sadly deluded and often mentally ill... Scientology is a grave threat to family and home life.'

This report was unambiguous to say the least, and actually resulted in a ban on Scientology and a raid on its headquarters. The ban was reversed in 1983, but at the time the Anderson Report was examined seriously by many governments throughout the world.

Persecution and Retribution

'May be deprived of property or injured by any means by any Scientologist without any discipline of the Scientologists.' — Hubbard Policy Letter dated October 16, 1967, describing enemies of the church who are 'Fair Game'.

Most religions have one thing in their favour: they promote peace. Scientology, in reality if not according to their official literature, does not.

Being labelled a 'Suppressive Person' (SP) by the church can be a harrowing experience. The Scientologists are not happy with verbal abuse or even court cases; there have been many disturbing incidents which conclusively prove they will go to criminal lengths to silence their enemies.

One example is the case of author Paulette Cooper, who wrote *The Scandal of Scientology* in 1971 (Stewart Lamont, Religion Inc: The Church of Scientology pp 71-72). At once, the org swung into action to silence her. Their first move was to steal some of her stationery and send bomb threats to themselves. This resulted in her arrest and indictment. In case the cost, both monetary and emotional, of fighting these charges wasn't enough, the church then launched 'Operation Freakout', with the aim 'to get P.C. incarcerated in a mental institution or jail or at least hit her so hard that she drops her attacks.' This involved threatening Arab consulates using an impersonator pretending to be Cooper and writing threatening letters to members of government, as well as having a male Scientologist enter a relationship with her to ascertain the program's effectiveness.

Other incidents involve such bizarre schemes as staging a hit-and-run accident, involving the hostile mayor of a town in which the organisation had become ensconced, in order to blackmail him (Stewart Lamont, Religion Inc: The Church of Scientology pp 69. The driver was Church member Sharon Thomas and the pedestrian church agent Mike Meisner); spreading rumours that an archbishop was a communist; or telling members of a university scholar's faculty that he was a homosexual. There existed also a much more sinister organisation called the 'Guardians', a genuine espionage agency designed to

infiltrate government agencies, forge documents and steal materials and files useful in blackmail. And, of course, the org would not stop at using the highly personal and confidential information obtained in auditing sessions to blackmail ex-members of the Church — the equivalent of a priest using information gained during confession for extortion purposes. (Stewart Lamont, Religion Inc: The Church of Scientology pp 85-86.)

Recently, the Church has made many new enemies by bringing action against those who publish information about the org on the Internet. Users of the Net are traditionally strongly anti-censorship, and the seizing of computer equipment belonging to a poster in the newsgroup *alt.religion.scientology* and those publishing web pages with anti-scientology information has only led to increased hostility amongst the Internet community. Now, anti-org web pages and documents have bloomed on the net, and are serving to effectively educate a new generation about the evils of the Church.

The Road to Xenu

'Well, is he saying that because this guy Xenu, millions of years ago, blew up thousands of thetans and caused them to become clustered together, that now everyone on Earth is some kind of multiple personality..?' — Margery Wakefield, The Road to Xenu

The answer to Ms Wakefield's question was, amazingly, 'Exactly!'. In essence, this is the wondrous secret contained in OT III, something that, according to the Church, could be fatal if read without the proper training. Apparently, the head of the galactic federation, Xenu, sent people to earth (then called Teegeeack), as a punishment. These 'Body Thetans' were destroyed by H-bombs implanted in volcanoes, and to this day they roam the earth in ethereal form, attaching themselves to us and affecting our lives. Ridding yourself of these clusters of Body Thetans makes you practically immortal.

Imagine if you had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and years of your life in the church, if your only friends were all Scientologists, only to be confronted with this ridiculous product of a pulp science fiction writer. Some of us would have no choice but to keep believing, incredible as it may seem. Certainly, the Church will go to amazing lengths to protect this information.

Think very carefully before accepting that free personality test — for many, it has been a road to ruin and despair.

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Much of the information came here, including most of the documents, was found on the web. For more info check out these web sites:

FACTnet information about Scientology:
<http://starbase.neosoft.com/~dcs/factnet/index.htm>
Steve's UK Scientology Information Page:
<http://www.demon.co.uk/castle/scientology.html>
Unofficial Scientology Home Page: <http://www.theta.com/goodman/>