SCIENTOLOGY
A NEW RELIGION

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Professor of Religion and Culture

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I. Professional Background

I received my B.A. *cum laude* (1964) in philosophy and political science from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, USA. My S.T.B. *cum laude* (1967) in theology is from Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. My M.A. (1972) and Ph.D. *distinction* (1976) in Special Religious Studies are from the Institute of Christian Thought, University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada. My dissertation was entitled "History and Eschatology in Jonathan Edwards: A Critique of the Heimert Thesis."

I have taught at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (Summer, 1966), Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Ontario (1967–1969), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario (Summer, 1972, 1973), University of Toronto, Extension, Toronto, Ontario (1972), and Renison College, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, since 1973. I hold an appointment as a Professor of Religion and Culture at Renison College, University of Waterloo, where I am also an Associate Professor of Social Development Studies. Since 1982 I have been part of the Supporting Faculty for the Consortium in Reformation History of the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph. I served as the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of

Waterloo (1987–1993) and I am currently the Graduate Officer for the M.A. in Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo.

I have also been a Visiting Scholar at Cambridge University, Cambridge, U.K., (1980), the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, New Delhi, India (1986), the Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Studies in Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras, India (1987), Hamdard University, New Delhi, India (1993), and Nairobi University, Nairobi, Kenya (1994). I have lectured at numerous universities in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

I am the author of four volumes in the study of religion: *To Whom It May Concern: Poverty, Humanity, Community,* (Philadelphia, 1969), *A World Broken By Unshared Bread,* (Geneva, 1970), *Religion in a New Key* (New Delhi, 1992) and *Jonathan Edwards' Grammar of Time, Self, and Society* (Lewiston, NY, 1993). I have also edited (singly or jointly) twelve further volumes in the field of religious studies including *Exploring Unification Theology* (New York, 1978), *God: The Contemporary Discussion* (New York, 1982), *The Many Faces of Religion and Society* (New York, 1985), *Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy: Studies in His Life and Thought* (Lewiston, NY, 1986), *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices for a New Frontier* (New York, 1989) and *Pluralism, Tolerance, and Dialogue* (Waterloo, 1989). I have compiled with Doris Jakobsh *A Canadian Interfaith Directory* (Waterloo, 1993). I have published more than forty scholarly articles including "Faith and History in Grant's Lament," "Media Ethics," "Cinema, Religion, and Popular Culture," "Sin and Society," "The Consolations of Philosophy," "New Religions: Issues and Questions," "Towards a Grammar of the Spirit in Society," "Interreligious Dialogue and Understanding," "The Purposes of Christ: Towards the Recovery of a Trinitarian Perspective," "From 'De' to 'Re' or Does the 'Future of Ontotheology' Require the Recovery of the Experience/Sense of Transcendence?", "The Kumbha Mela: A Festival of Renewal," and "To Hear the Stars Speak: Ontology in the Study of Religion." My publications range across the broad area of religion and culture but can be broken down into the following areas: I. Theology and Ethics, II. Religion in North America, III. New Religious Movements, and IV. Interreligious Dialogue.

I have been teaching in Religious Studies for more than twenty-five years. At Renison College, University of Waterloo, I regularly teach courses on the Religious Quest, The Study of Religion, The History of Christian Thought, and Interreligious Encounter and Dialogue that employ the comparative, historical, and sociological methods common to the academic study of religion. I also teach courses from time to time on Religion and Politics, Religion and Literature, Religion and Film, and I have lectured in the course on Sects, Cults, and New Religious Movements. I have also taught graduate courses on Christianity and World Religions.

I am a long-standing member of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, the American Academy of Religion, the Canadian Theological Society, the Society for Values in Higher Education, the Royal Asiatic Society, and the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies. I have served as a Consultant to major international and interreligious conferences including the Assembly of the World's Religions (1985, 1990, 1992).

As a scholar of religion and culture, I have been engaged in the study of new religious movements since the mid-1970s. I have been interested to understand the origins, beliefs, practices and the relationships of these new movements to the wider culture. (Many of the new religions are not "new" in any profound sense, but are simply new to North American society.) I have also been interested in, and somewhat amused by, the intense, often hysterical, reaction of sectors of the public to the new religious movements. I have done extensive field work with several new religious communities in Canada, the United States, and India.

In relation to the Church of Scientology, I first became aware of this new religious community in the mid-1970s. Then I met members of the Church of Scientology in Toronto and Kitchener, Ontario. I was able to participate in some meetings in the late 1970s and early 1980s that brought together members of the Church of Scientology and scholars of religion to discuss the basic beliefs and practices of Scientology. I have met some members of American and British branches of the Church. I have had extended conversations with church members concerning their experience of Scientology and its impact on their lives. I have maintained a limited contact with some Canadian church members down to the present day. I have visited Scientology Centers in Kitchener and on Yonge Street in Toronto. Since the mid-1970s I have read many of the major publications of the Church of Scientology including *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, The Volunteer Minister's Handbook, What is Scientology?*, and *The Scientology Religion.* I have also read Church publications that address current social issues including drug abuse, mental health practices, and religious liberty. I have read scholarly articles and books, mainly by sociologists of religion, on the Church of Scientology.

II. The Assignment

I have been asked to share my opinion, as a scholar of religion, on two questions. 1. Is Scientology a "religion?" and 2. Are Scientology churches "places of worship?" It is further my understanding that these questions are germane to questions pertaining to the exemption of Church of Scientology organizations from taxation in certain jurisdictions. In approaching these questions, I provide some background in the study of new religious movements and

then turn to directly address the above questions. My analysis and response to the questions are based only on my status as a scholar of religion and not on any expertise in any legal or administrative field.

III. The "New Religions" and the Study of Religion

The second half of this century has seen the emergence of a host of "new religions" in North America and Europe. In the public media they were often called "the cults" and included such groups as Hare Krishna, 3HO, the Unification Church, Transcendental Meditation and Scientology. When the "new religions" attracted the attention of the public media it was usually in relation to sensational claims that members of the new religious communities were not there by choice but had been "programmed" or "brainwashed." Such claims have been the subject of scholarly investigation (Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie,* Oxford, 1984) as well as a number of governmental inquiries (Hill Report on "Mind-Development Groups, Sects, and Cults in Ontario," 1980). Such responsible scholarly and governmental inquiries have found no grounds for such charges, but such prejudicial images still persist.

When scholars of religion turned to the study of the "new religious communities" in the 1960s and 70s, they made several observations that are worth noting here. These studies continued into the 1980s and 90s and extended the investigations to other parts of the world.

Many of the "new religions" were not really "new" but just new to North America. For example, the Hare Krishna movement is often regarded as a "new religion"/"cult," but it was in fact only "new" in North America. It is a community of long standing in India and has its origins in the life and work of the 15th century Hindu reformer, Caitanya. It has been a continuous presence in India since that time, but only came to North America in the 1960s. The same is the case for a number of other new religious movements that have their origins in Eastern Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh traditions.

A smaller number of the "new religions" have their origins in the recovery of forgotten or neglected aspects of older religious traditions, often the mystical and meditative dimensions of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths. For example, Canada's first "deprogramming" case involved a young woman, a graduate of the University of Waterloo, who had joined a Catholic charismatic community in Orangeville, Ontario.

Many of the "new religions" have emerged from the encounter of missionary Christianity or missionary Islam with indigenous traditions in Africa and Asia. When these groups have

come to propagate their faith in North America, this has been viewed with alarm since many of the beliefs of the newer communities are considered "heretical" to the older denominations. Some of these synthetic movements, like the Unification Church, have their origins in the Christian missionary world but incorporate elements of the indigenous or traditional religions as well as "new revelations." An analogous case is the Bahai tradition which emerges out of the Islamic tradition but incorporates a "new revelation."

Some of the new religions were generally "new," for example, Scientology and the Prosperos. (See Robert Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1973.) Yet we find, even in these cases, a rejection of absolute novelty when, for example, L. Ron Hubbard declares that Scientology is "a direct extension of the work of Gautama Siddhartha Buddha." *(Volunteer Minister's Handbook)* Thus, even in these cases, there are elements of belief, practice, inspiration, or ritual that have antecedents or parallels in older and/or other traditions.

Historians of religion remind us that "new religious movements" are always emerging. For example, historians pointed to 19th century America as a century in which "new religious movements" sprang up all across the country, or to 20th century Japan especially after WWII where a similar phenomenon was observed. Most of the 19th century American cases were variant readings of Christianity, but "new" nonetheless. (See Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America,* Bloomington, IN: 1989.) There were Shakers and Quakers, Mormons and New Lights, Oneidians and New Harmonians, and a thousand others. In the Japanese case, most of the new religious movements had their roots in Buddhism, the most well known is Sokka Gakkai. This led these same historians to make the following correlations: (i) that while new religious movements are continually emerging, they generally have a very short life. Emerging around a charismatic or prophetic or revelatory figure, they often disappeared within 2–3 years. And (ii) the some few that did endure came to be recognized as fully legitimate religious traditions. Consider, for example, the Mormons, Church of Christ, Scientists, and Seventh-day Adventists, all of whom were widely attacked when they emerged in the 19th century, but are now considered "legitimate" religious communities. The Bahai community is a non-North American example of this same phenomenon as is Sokka Gakkai in Japan with its Buddhist roots.

Sociologists of religion also made an important observation when they observed that one of the differences between earlier new religious movements and those of the later 20th century in North America was their social location. New religious movements typically emerge among the most marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of society. This phenomenon one would

easily recognize if one were to walk through the ghettos of urban America (or the favelas of Latin America, or the squatter towns that ring the cities of Africa) or visit the rural poor: there one would discover a host of religious groupings that are not familiar. But in these social locations, not much attention is given to them. The new element in the religious movements of the late 20th century is that they attracted a different social class: youth from middle and upper-middle classes. (See Bryan Wilson, *The Social Impact of New Religious Movements,* New York, 1981.) It is easy to imagine middle or upper-class parents becoming distressed when they learned that their 25-year-old son who had graduated from Harvard was now following a Korean messiah, or that their 24-year-old daughter who had graduated from the University of Toronto was now singing and chanting "Hare Krishnan" at the airport. But we know historically—e.g., St. Thomas' parents held him captive for a year when he wanted to become a Dominican, then a new religious order—that such responses often occurred when adult children embrace new or unconventional religious traditions. The young adults attracted to the popular new religions of the 1960s and 70s were neither poor nor marginalized. They were from the middle and upper-middle classes. Moreover, these movements were usually much smaller than media accounts suggested. In Canada, for example, memberships in many of the new religious communities numbered in the hundreds or thousands rather than the tens or hundreds of thousands often alleged by opponents of these newer communities. Some groups in Canada, however, had larger memberships.

The "new religions" presented phenomena to the scholar of religion that challenged some conventional academic notions, but no scholar of religion, to my knowledge, had any doubt that in the "new religions" we were dealing with religious phenomena. Whether or not it was "good religion" or "bad religion" was often a matter of considerable public debate, but scholars of religion never doubted that it was religious phenomena that we were encountering here. (See J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America,* New York, 1986 and *The Encyclopedia of American Religions,* Detroit, 1989, which includes the "new religions.")

IV. Is Scientology a Religion?

The modern academic study of religion that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries must be distinguished from the classical disciplines of theology. While the task of theology was the exposition of the faith of a particular community (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc.)—this most commonly meant the Christian faith in the west—the academic study of religion was concerned to offer a scientific description and analysis of all religious phenomena. Thus one of the first tasks of the modern discipline of the study of religion was to free the definition of religion from its typical identification with Christianity. Standard dictionary definitions of religion

still reflect this tendency to identify religion in general with the characteristics of especially Christianity and other monotheistic faiths. Those definitions often indicate that the sole or central characteristic of religion is "belief in a Supreme Being." But scholars of religion knew of great and ancient religions that had no such "belief in a Supreme Being." The principal examples were Buddhism, especially in its Theravadin forms where such a belief was explicitly rejected, and Jainism, which also explicitly rejected this belief. Yet these religions were more than 2,000 years old. Moreover, the Confucian traditions minimized the emphasis on the Transcendent and maximized emphasis on proper human relations. And in Hinduism one encountered many gods and goddesses and not just a single "Supreme Being." Moreover, the very mystical traditions of the monotheistic faiths of the West were often critical of the very notion of God as a "Supreme Being" and insisted that the Reality of God transcended such conceptions. Thus it was seen as essential to have a definition or understanding of religion that was adequate to the wide variety of religious traditions found among human beings throughout history.

At the same time, there was a recognition that in the religious traditions of humankind there was a dimension that transcended the mundane. However, that dimension or reality was named in a wide variety of ways. While Christians might strive for "union with God," or Muslims seek "submission to Allah," Buddhists were more bent on achieving "inner enlightenment or satori," Hindus more directed to realizing the "eternal atman or Self," and Jains strove to cultivate a "good mind." Thus the definition of religion that emerged in the modern study of religion included some recognition of "a Beyond" understood broadly enough to include those religions that either did not have a notion of a "Supreme Being" or explicitly rejected such an idea in the name of another conception of the Ultimate. While every religion identifies a *sacred* dimension of life, not every religion identifies the sacred with a "Supreme Being."

While Western Protestant Christianity may have especially emphasized *belief* as central to religion, other strands of religious life, Christian and non-Christian, put more emphasis on *practice.* In Buddhism, for example, the issue is practice: the practice of the Eight-Fold Path as the Way to overcome suffering. In Hinduism one encounters a whole Way to the Ultimate where the whole life is one of practice (*rajyoga*) or work *(karmayoga*). But practice is not just meditation or contemplation or action, it is also prayer, ethical behaviour, familial relations, and a host of other practices. In all religious traditions, though in varying degrees, there is a whole life that is to be lived in conformity to the ideal of the religion and that is a life exemplified in practice. Thus, practice in conformity to the ideals and the ethical guidelines of a given religious way was seen as a further dimension to the understanding of what religion is. Moreover, the practice we observe in religious communities and traditions is often ritual practice.

Thus, the modern study of religion was led to acknowledge a further dimension of religious life, namely, the ritual dimension. Rites and rituals are structured acts of the religious community to facilitate communion with the Ultimate dimensions of life. In some of the Chinese traditions, rites were considered essential to maintain the order of the cosmos and were elaborate events spreading over several days. Some religious traditions downplay the role of ritual, e.g., Quaker Christians, but even here they would consider the "gathering in silence" to be essential to their community. Though the ritual dimension varies greatly from tradition to tradition—and even within a given tradition as is witnessed in the ritual splendor of Orthodox Christianity and the ritual simplicity of the Mennonite meeting house—it is a dimension present to the religious life of humankind.

These elements of belief, practice, and ritual do not stand in splendid isolation but come together in the life of religious community to create its distinctive *way of life* or *culture*. Hindus, then, are people who share a complex of beliefs, practices, and rites that serve to facilitate their way of life, a way that has both mundane and supramundane dimensions. The Latin root of the term religion, *religare,* means "to bind together," and here we can see the two-fold meaning of that "binding together." There is the "binding together" of "the human and the divine" through a religion, and the "binding together" of human beings in a religious community.

It is in the light of these considerations that there has emerged in the modern study of religion an understanding of religion as a *community of men and women bound together by a complex of beliefs, practices, behaviours, and rituals that seek, through this Way, to relate human to sacred/divine life*. It is essential, however, to understand that each dimension of this definition of religion—community, belief, practice, behaviour, ritual, Way, and divine—will be understood (a) within the specific terms of a given religious tradition and (b) with relatively more emphasis to some rather than other elements in a given tradition. Thus, for example, the "community" dimension of religion might receive more emphasis in Orthodox Judaism than it does in Taoism or even in other strands of Judaism. Likewise, the divine might be understood as a Transcendent Reality as in Judaism or as an immanent, though unrealized, Self, as it is in many Hindu schools. But such variations do not invalidate the definition of religion, but simply reflect the variety of religious phenomena that must be covered by a modern, academic account of religion.

It is in the light of the above that we can then ask whether or not Scientology is a religion. The brief answer is "yes, it is." We can make this clearer if we now take the above understanding of religion and look at the case of Scientology.

In the Church of Scientology, do we encounter a distinctive set of religious beliefs concerning the meaning and ultimate end of human life? Even the most cursory familiarity with the Scientology community and its literature will lead one to answer in the affirmative. According to their own literature, Scientology is "an applied religious philosophy and technology resolving problems of the spirit, life and thought." Those "problems of the spirit, life and thought" are not permanent but can be overcome, according to Scientology. That overcoming of the "problems of the spirit, life and thought" is centered, in Scientology, in awareness and knowledge. Central to that awareness and knowledge are the *thetan* and the *Eight Dynamics*. Each requires a brief clarification in order to indicate some central aspects of Scientology belief.

According to Scientology, our humanity is composed of different parts: the body, the mind, and the *thetan.* The thetan in Scientology is analogous to the soul in Christianity and the spirit in Hinduism. Part of the problem of life is that human beings have lost an awareness of their true nature. In Scientology, this means an awareness of themselves as thetans. Yet awareness and knowledge of oneself as a thetan is essential to well-being and survival. Human beings often confuse their deepest reality with the body or the mind, or see themselves as only body and/or mind. But for Scientology it is essential that human beings recover and recognize their spiritual nature, that, in the language of Scientology, "one is a thetan." As thetans, human beings are "spiritual, immortal, and 'virtually indestructible.'"

Since the awareness of oneself as thetan has been obscured by "engrams" or lost in the confusions of thetan with the body and/or the mind, a chief religious task is to recover one's spirituality. It is essential since "the thetan is the source of all creation and life itself." This awareness then is the first stage in the practice of a religious way that will lead us to become, in Scientology terms, *Clear*. As human beings become aware of their true nature, according to Scientology, and of the concentric circles of reality, then, Scientologists believe, they can proceed, freely and creatively, through life's Eight Dynamics. (See *What is Scientology?*, 1992 edition)

The basic message of life, according to Scientology, is survival across the Eight Dynamics. The first dynamic is "Self," or the dynamic of life to survive as an individual. This first dynamic exists within ever larger circles of existence that extend to the eighth dynamic or Infinity. Since the delineation of the Eight Dynamics is fundamental to Scientology it is appropriate to outline each "dynamic" briefly. As indicated, the dynamics begin with the individual existence or "Self" and its drive to survive and proceed through the second dynamic which Scientology calls "creativity" or "making things for the future," and includes the family and the rearing

of children. The third dynamic is "Group Survival," that compartment of life that involves voluntary communities, friends, companies, nations and races. The fourth dynamic is "the species of mankind" or the "urge toward survival through all mankind and as all mankind." The fifth dynamic is "life forms" or the "urge of all living things" towards survival. The sixth dynamic is the "physical universe." The seventh dynamic is the "spiritual dynamic" or the urge "for life itself to survive." The eighth dynamic is "the urge toward existence as INFINITY," or what others call "a Supreme Being or Creator." "A knowledge of the dynamics allows one to more easily inspect and understand any aspect of life." (*What is Scientology?*, 1992 edition, p. 149.) It is within life as a whole, or across the Eight Dynamics in Scientology terms, that the religious journey and task unfolds.

It is particularly within the Eighth Dynamic that one encounters the Scientology affirmation of "what others call" the Supreme Being or Creator. But Scientology prefers the term "Infinity" to speak of "the allness of all." The reticence of Scientology in relation to "Infinity" has its parallels in other traditions. Before the Ultimate Mystery, mystics of all traditions counsel restraint, even silence.

Scientology beliefs concerning the thetan have parallels in other religious traditions, as does their belief in the Eight Dynamics and the ultimate spiritual nature of things. The religious quest in Scientology is more analogous to Eastern processes of enlightenment and realization than it is to Western versions of the religious quest which tend to emphasize conformity to the Divine Will. Some scholars even suggest that in Scientology we have a version of "technologized Buddhism" (See F. Flinn in J. Fichter, ed., *Alternatives to American Mainline Churches,* New York, 1983), while others emphasize its parallels to Eastern mind development practices. But one can also see in their belief in the Eight Dynamics a parallel with the medieval vision of the Soul's Journey to God which culminates in identification with the Ultimate Mystery, God.

Like some other religious traditions, Scientology sees the religious quest in largely religio-therapeutic terms, that is, the process of addressing the human problem is a process of actualizing a lost or hidden human spiritual power or dimension of life. In Buddhism the problem and process is to move from unenlightened to enlightened and in Christianity from sinful to redeemed, while in Scientology, it is to move from "preclear" to "Clear" and beyond. Here the state of Clear is understood as an awareness of one's spiritual nature and realized spiritual freedom, freed from the burdens of past experiences and capable of living a rational, moral existence. This in Scientology is the nature of the religious quest, the goal of religious striving. This quest does not end in the state of Clear, however, but continues on to higher levels of spiritual awareness and ability on the upper or "operating thetan" levels.

At these upper levels of achievement, one is able to control oneself and environment, or, as Scientology doctrine puts it, to be "at cause over life, thought, matter, energy, space and time."

Coupled then with the beliefs outlined above is a religious practice and way. This dimension of Scientology is often described in their terms as "technology," or the methods of applying the principles. Central to the religious practice in Scientology is the phenomenon of *auditing*, regarded as a sacrament by Scientologists. This is a process by which one becomes aware of the hidden spiritual barriers that keep one from becoming aware of one's essential spiritual nature as a thetan and from properly exercising that nature. These obstacles to a fully functioning or realized life are called "engrams." A religious artifact known as the "E-Meter" is used in auditing to assist parishioners or Scientology adherents to recognize and overcome these negative blocks on the way to Clear. (See L. Ron Hubbard, *The Volunteer Minister's Handbook*, Los Angeles, 1976.) The auditing process unfolds between a religious specialist—an *auditor* who is a minister or minister-in-training in the Church of Scientology—and a person receiving auditing, a *preclear*. Following set procedures and questions, the auditing process is designed to enable the preclear to become aware of what he or she is and to develop their abilities to live more effectively. Scientologists believe that such a practice will allow a person to move from "a condition of spiritual blindness to the brilliant joy of spiritual existence."

Such practices have parallels in the spiritual disciplines of other traditions that likewise seek to awaken one's inner spiritual nature. While the technology of the E-Meter in Scientology is unique to our century, the idea behind it is not. It is analogous to the roles of mandalas in some Buddhist traditions, or meditation with the aid of external means in other Eastern traditions.

Moreover, it is precisely the belief of Scientologists that L. Ron Hubbard has both achieved insight into the nature of reality and a practical technology for the recovery of humanity's true nature. The writings of Hubbard serve as authoritative texts within the Scientology community in ways analogous to the sacred literatures of other traditions: the Vedas in Hinduism, the Sutras of Buddhism, etc. But the insights of Hubbard are not, Scientologists claim, a matter of mere belief, since they are open to confirmation in experience through the practice of the religious way that Hubbard has devised. This also echoes the ancient Buddhist wisdom which gives priority to experience.

The practice of Scientologists extends beyond this central religious technology and way since, as one moves towards the state of Clear and beyond, all one's action becomes more free, dynamic, and significant. On the way to that end, Scientologists read their texts, test their beliefs, act in the wider society, develop their inner life, marry, and in all their actions and behaviour seek

to realize the ideals of their faith. In Scientology literature one finds numerous references to "Codes of Conduct" and other ethical guidelines that should shape the life of Scientologists.

Religion is not just a set of beliefs, rites, and practices, it is also a community of people joined together by such beliefs, practices, and rites. In Scientology we also find this dimension of religious life. In many parts of the world we find groups of Scientologists regularly gathering as a religious community. There one finds sermons, reading from Scientology Scripture, listening to L. Ron Hubbard's recorded lectures, etc., acts meant to deepen one's commitment to the faith and to extend knowledge of that faith to others. The community is composed of those who have found in Scientology answers and technologies that address the fundamental questions of life. (See Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements, A Practical Introduction,* London, 1989.)

Conclusion: In the light of this review of Scientology in relation to the elements of the modern scientific definition of religion, it is apparent that Scientology is a religion. It has its own distinctive beliefs in and account of an unseen, spiritual order, its own distinctive religious practice and ritual life, it has its own authoritative texts and community-building activity.

V. Is Scientology a Worshipping Community?

Just as the modern academic definition of religion has found it necessary to open its definition to include types of religious behaviour, practice, and belief that move beyond the boundaries of the Western monotheistic traditions, so too in its understanding of "worship," modern academic definitions have had to move beyond the Western context and include the practices of Eastern traditions of religious and spiritual life.

Viewed historically and globally, the student of religion encounters a wide range of "worshipping behaviour and action." Cosmic religious traditions of indigenous peoples tuned their worshipping activities to the cosmic rhythms of nature and the Creator. Virtually every act of the community—from hunting to planting, from birth to death—was preceded by ritual or worshipping activity. In the historical religious traditions of the West, prayer and ritual were central acts of the worshipping community. Here worship ranged from remembering Allah in five daily acts of prayer, to recalling the Covenant with Yahweh on the holy days, and elevating the "Body of Christ" in the daily masses of the Roman Catholic faith. In the traditions of the East, worship might be the act of silent meditation of a yogi in the solitude of the Himalayas or the repetitious chanting of sky-clad Jains before the image of a "realized soul" or the elaborate Shinto rituals in the presence of the "kami" that are present to every drop of water or leaf on a tree, or the week-long services of "chant and prayer" by Tibetan Buddhists who reject the

notion of a Creator god. Worship, in general, came to be seen, by modern students of religion, as religious actions that facilitate communion with, or alignment to, the unseen Sacred. Viewed globally and historically, it involves a wide range of action and behaviour.

Within the Church of Scientology we find a wide range of worshipping activity, actions designed to facilitate communion with, and alignment with, the Sacred. It is to be found in their *auditing* activity (described above) and in their *training.* Auditing is the practice that moves one from "preclear" to "Clear" and beyond; it is the Scientology way of facilitating awareness of oneself as an immortal spiritual being, the *thetan,* that unseen dimension that is the subject of the religious life. But of equal importance in Scientology is the practice of training. In auditing, one becomes free; through training, one *stays* free and learns "to accomplish the purpose of improving conditions in life."

As we already indicated, the forms of worship within a given religious tradition accord with their experience of what is sacred and/or ultimate. For Scientology, training is the activity which enables one to move through the Eight Dynamics towards the eighth Dynamic, Infinity. Training is neither random nor mere "learning" in Scientology. It is rather a moving through a precise sequence—at one's own speed and according to a "checksheet"—in order to acquire essential knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in everyday life. There are a variety of training courses offered in Scientology, ranging from introductory to those that contain "knowledge about the ultimate capabilities of the thetan."

More familiar forms of worshipping activity are to be found in the communal rituals that occur when Scientologists gather for rites and observances. The literature of Scientology contains rites and rituals that mark major events in the life cycle: birth, naming, marriage, and death. These rites and rituals link these life events to the sacred depths of life as seen by the Scientology community. (See L. Ron Hubbard, *The Scientology Religion,* London, 1974 for descriptions of some of the rites and rituals.) These life-cycle rituals of Scientology find their analogs in virtually every other religious tradition. Such rituals enact the conviction that human life is linked to unseen, spiritual dimensions that must be recognized and acknowledged if human life is to achieve its wholeness and fulfillment.

Acts of worship can be individual as well as communal. This is probably most obvious in relation to prayer, but it is also true in relation to meditational acts and spiritual disciplines. Whether it is a Sufi praying alone or joined with others in a whirling dance prayer, one is engaged in worshipping activity. Whether it is the Buddhist alone on the hillside deep in meditation or joined with others in chanting a *sutra,* one is encountering acts of worship.

In Scientology one encounters both the individual and communal acts of worship. But in Scientology, like the realization traditions of the East, individual effort is central. This process of realization or movement towards total spiritual freedom involves auditing and training within Scientology. The analogy is the "guru-disciple" relationship within Eastern traditions. In the "guru-disciple" relationship the principal acts of worship are interior acts which facilitate, in Hinduism, movements towards the realization of *atman,* the soul, which is also the Ultimate. These inward movements may be linked with certain outward actions like yogic postures or breathing techniques or even certain inward actions like visualizing an image. These inward spiritual movements can unfold over shorter or longer periods of times and are part of the worshipping activity of the devotee. In many Eastern traditions, the ascetic and meditative acts of training and discipline of an individual for growth in the spiritual life may unfold over many months or years or in essential solitude once direction is given by the master. Though the practice is carried out in solitude, it is still linked to the life of a community through shared convictions, beliefs, and shared acts. In Scientology, this is the proper context for auditing and training where the relationship between the religious counselor and the individual initiate is pivotal. Again, the analog is there with the spiritual director in Christian monastic traditions, the pastor in the Protestant traditions, the guru in the Hindu traditions, the Lama in Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

In Scientology, these inward and spiritual acts associated with auditing and training to facilitate the unfolding of one's spiritual nature are also linked with growth in religious knowledge and education. In the Scientology context this means primarily the study of the writings and recorded lectures of L. Ron Hubbard on Dianetics and Scientology. (But it also includes the courses which he constructed and films that he wrote and directed.) Again, this linkage of spiritual practice and scriptural study is found across tradition. The classical Hindu yogi simultaneously practices the austerities and reads his Vedas. The devout Muslim reads his Quran and observes the month of daylight fasting. These activities are seen to reinforce one another on the spiritual path.

Conclusion: In the light of this review of Scientology practice and activity, I conclude that Scientology does engage in worshipping activity, as worship is understood in the modern study of religion, in their places of worship. The activities of Scientologists in their places of worship fall into the range of patterns and practices found within the religious life of humankind.

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