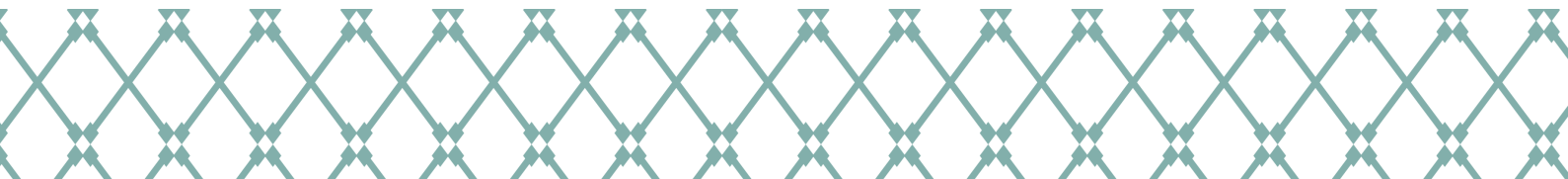




SCIENTOLOGY:  
A WORSHIPPING  
COMMUNITY



Lonnie D. Kliever, Ph.D.  
Professor of Religious Studies  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.  
26 September 1994





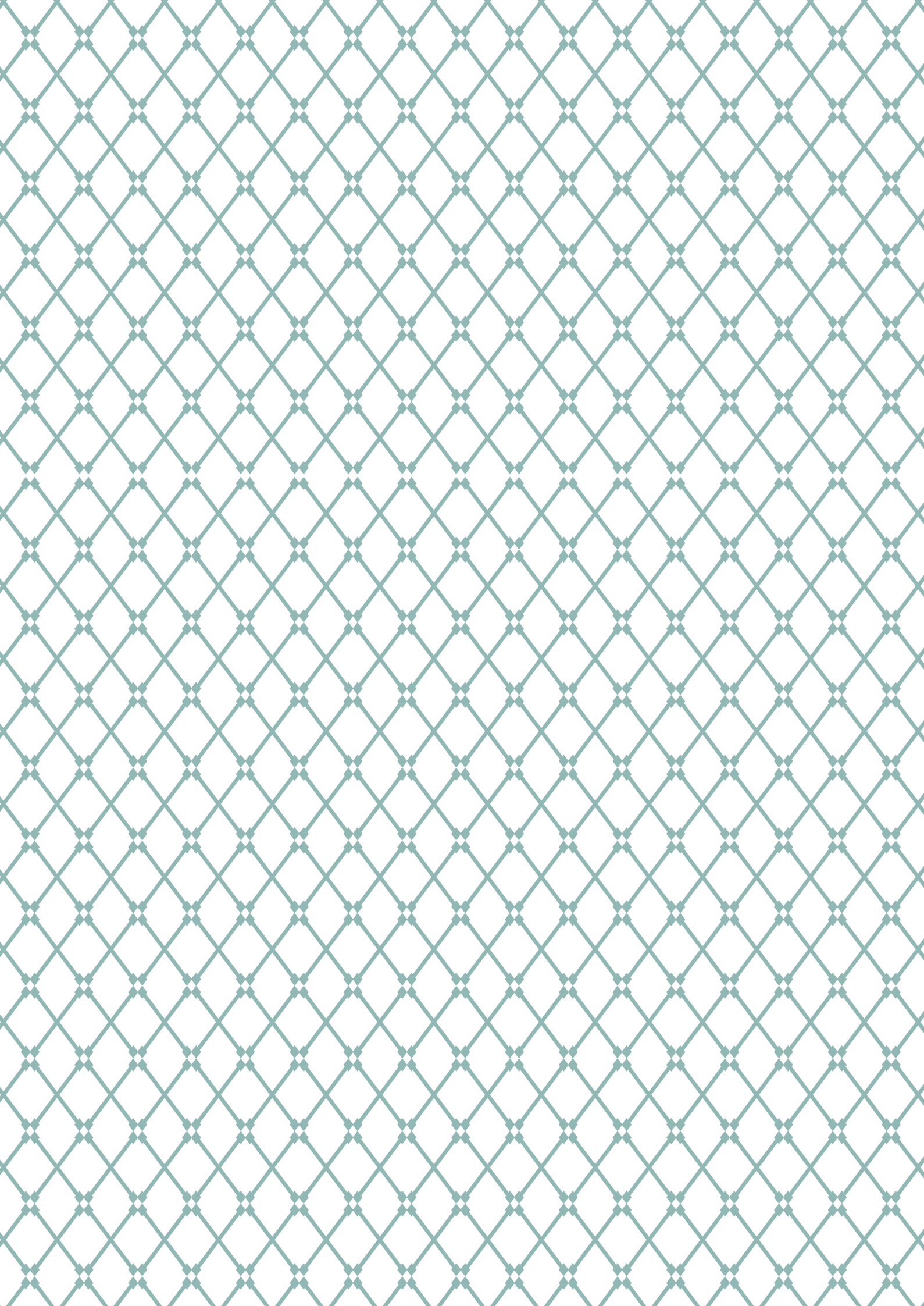
SCIENTOLOGY  
A WORSHIPPING  
COMMUNITY



SCIENTOLOGY  
A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

# CONTENTS

I.	Professional Background	1
II.	Assignment	2
III.	Analysis of Scientology as a Religious Organization	3
	III.I. Scientology Meets the Definition of Any Religious Tradition	3
	III.II. Scientology Pursues the Goals of Any Religious Quest	5
	III.III. Scientology Exhibits the Dimensions of Any Religious Community	6
	III.IV. Conclusion	9
IV.	An Analysis of Scientology as a Worshipping Community	9
	IV.I. The Object of Worship in Scientology	10
	IV.II. The Forms of Worship in Scientology	11
	IV.III. The Occasions of Worship in Scientology	12
	IV.IV. Conclusion	14



Lonnie D. Kliever, Ph.D.  
Professor of Religious Studies  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.  
26 September 1994

# SCIENTOLOGY A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

## I. PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

I received a Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude* in Psychology from Hardin-Simmons University in 1955. I completed as Master of Divinity *cum laude* at Union Theological seminary of New York in 1959. I received a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion and Philosophy from Duke University in 1963.

I have previously held full-time faculty appointments in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Texas at El Paso from 1962–65 rising to the rank of Associate Professor, in the Department of Religion at Trinity University of San Antonio from 1965–69, in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Windsor of Ontario, Canada, from 1969–75 rising to the rank of Full Professor. Since 1973, I have held an appointment of Full Professor of Religious Studies at Southern Methodist University, serving as chairperson of the Department of Religious Studies from 1975–86 and from 1993 to the present.

I am a long-time member in good standing of the American Association of University Professors, American Academy of Religion, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, American Theological Society, Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, Canadian Theological Society, Council on the Study of Religion, and I have held national office, chaired professional committees or served on editorial boards in most of these professional societies.

I am a philosopher of religion and culture with special competence in the religions of the modern era. As such, I am primarily concerned with the changing forms of religious belief and practice in both mainline and newer religious movements as these older and newer religions respond to the challenges and changes of modern life. I regularly teach a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the comparative, philosophical and social scientific study of religion at Southern Methodist University. I also carry on a sustained program of scholarly research and publication in my area of specialization, having published five books dealing with modern religious thought entitled *Radical Christianity* (1968), *H. Richard Niebuhr* (1977), *The Shattered Spectrum* (1981), *The Terrible Meek: Essays on Religion and Revolution* (1987), and *Dax's Case: Essays in Medical Ethics and Human Meaning* (1989) as well as numerous articles in such leading scholarly journals as *The Harvard Theological Review*, *The Journal of Religion*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Studies in Religion*, *Religion in Life*, *The Religious Studies Review*, and *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

As a specialist in modern religions, I have conducted an extensive scholarly study of the Church of Scientology. I have read most of the major theoretical texts written and published by L. Ron Hubbard, reviewed many of the technical and administrative bulletins prepared by Mr. Hubbard and the administrative and ecclesiastical officers of the Church, and examined representative examples of the training manuals used by teachers and students in various courses offered by the Church. I have also read a number of journalistic and scholarly studies of the Church of Scientology. In addition, I have talked with practicing Scientologists, and visited their 46th Street Church and 82nd Street Celebrity Centre in New York City, their Flag Service Organization in Clearwater, Florida, and their Celebrity Centre in Dallas.

## II. ASSIGNMENT

I have been asked to give my expert opinion on two broad questions: (1) Is Scientology a “religion” in all respects of that word? and (2) Are Scientology Churches “places of worship” in all respects of that phrase? I understand that these issues arise in the context of administrative proceedings to determine whether Churches of Scientology qualify for property tax exemption as “places of worship.” I approach these questions not from any expertise or perspective in law but in my capacity as a philosopher of religion and culture, with particular knowledge about religions of the modern era, including Scientology.

In anticipation of the full discussion that follows, I am convinced by reason of my professional training and scholarly research that Scientology is a religious organization in all respects of that



term because it meets the scholarly definition of any religious tradition, because it pursues the goals of any religious quest, and because it exhibits the dimensions of any religious community. I am also convinced Scientology is a worshipping community in every sense of the word because its object of worship is both absolute and transcendent, its forms of worship are both spiritual and educational, and its occasions of worship are both private and public.

### III. ANALYSIS OF SCIENTOLOGY AS A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

#### III.I. SCIENTOLOGY MEETS THE DEFINITION OF ANY RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Many scholars in the field of Religious Studies define religion in purely functional terms. Perhaps the two most widely accepted scholarly definitions of religion in this vein are philosopher Paul Tillich's description of religion as "the state of being grasped by an *ultimate concern*" and historian Frederick J. Streng's characterization of religion as "a means of *ultimate transformation*." For such approaches, any concern that qualifies all other concerns as preliminary or any power that transforms a person to the core can be regarded as essentially religious in meaning and purpose. These functional approaches to the scholarly definition of religion are quite similar to the legal definition of religion set forth in *Seeger v. United States*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965), which stipulates that "religious training and belief includes and extends to those sincere and meaningful beliefs which occupy a place in life *parallel* to that filled by the orthodox belief in a Supreme Being."

While appreciating the scholarly usefulness and legal propriety of such functional approaches to religion, my purposes as a scholar are better served by a somewhat narrower definition of religion. Similar to the approach of many other scholars in the field of Religious Studies, I define religion substantively as *any system of beliefs and practices claiming to align individuals and communities with the transcendent ground of their existence*. All elements of this definition are important because they point to important and indispensable aspects of every organized religious tradition. Every religion is a system of *beliefs and practices*. A religion provides both a way of understanding and engaging the world in all its mystery and meaning. Every religion sustains and supports *individuals and communities*. A religion relates the individual to a community of like-thinking and like-acting persons. Most important of all, every religion is rooted in a *transcendent ground*. By "transcendent ground" I refer to the distinction that religions typically draw between the ordinary world and that extraordinary being or power which unifies and completes the ordinary world. Religions often speak of this transcendent ground as the Sacred, the Divine, or the Infinite while assigning it such names as God, Allah or Brahman. But however named and explained,

every religion affirms some ultimate reality that answers the life-and-death questions of human existence. The distinguishing mark of any and all religions is a relationship to this ultimate reality.

Without question, Scientology meets both the functional and legal definitions of religion as “a state of ultimate concern” or as “a means of ultimate transformation.” But just as certainly, Scientology meets the narrower scholarly definition of religion that I have proposed. Scientology presents a system of beliefs and practices which claims to align both individuals and communities with the transcendent ground of all existence. More precisely, Scientology meets the *sine qua non* test of any religion, since it affirms the reality of a transcendent ground of human existence and understands this transcendent ground in a fully spiritual way.

Scientists see human life bent on survival across eight *dynamics*, or purposes. They represent these eight interactive dynamics as concentric circles, wherein the first dynamic of individual existence is successively surrounded and sustained by more encompassing dynamics of communal and spiritual existence. Thus, existence across each dynamic participates in and points toward life’s ultimate spiritual origin and destiny. The first dynamic is the urge toward survival through individual existence; the second dynamic toward survival through family life; the third dynamic through groups; the fourth dynamic toward survival through the human race; the fifth dynamic toward survival through all life forms; the sixth dynamic toward survival through the physical universe; the seventh dynamic toward survival through the spiritual universe, and the eighth dynamic toward survival through a Supreme Being or as Infinity. Thus, while the first six dynamics are primarily concerned with spiritual well-being in the everyday world, the seventh and eighth dynamics tie these planes of everyday existence to spiritual dimensions of reality which radically transcend the everyday physical and social world.

Scientology’s seventh dynamic affirms a spiritual dimension of existence that radically transcends the physical body and the material world. As such, this view of man as a spiritual being has affinities with Hinduism’s imperishable *Atman* and Christianity’s immortal soul. For Scientology, the real person is not the body, much less the things used to adorn and extend bodily life. The real person is an inherently good spiritual being who uses the physical body and the material world. Scientists call this immortal spiritual being the “thetan.” Ideally, when fully operating, the thetan has unlimited capacities of knowledge and power. However, the thetan cannot fully and freely operate “at cause” in this way until it has been liberated from the mental blocks and their harmful physical and psychological side effects which have accrued over many past lifetimes of embodied existence. These mental blocks, which are called *engrams* by Scientists, must be erased before the thetan can regain his creative power and wisdom. This process of erasing engrams,

which is called *Clearing* in Scientology, has been discovered and perfected by Mr. Hubbard in the spiritual healing technology of Dianetics and the applied religious philosophy of Scientology.

Scientology's eighth dynamic affirms a spiritual context of life that radically transcends the empirical self and the physical universe. Scientologists are reluctant to claim complete technological control and philosophical understanding of this highest level of spirituality. But such reluctance has a long and honored place in the world's religions. The ancient Jewish scribe dared not write the name of God out of reverence before his "shekinah glory." The medieval Christian theologian only spoke of God by "the way of negation" in recognition of God's transcendent Otherness. The ancient Chinese sage insisted that "the *Tao* which can be conceived is not the real *Tao*." The medieval Indian mystic addressed the Supreme Reality as "He before whom all words recoil." Scientology echoes this same time-honored religious modesty when it clearly affirms but does not fully explain that individuals ultimately survive "through a Supreme Being" or "as Infinity."

### III.II. SCIENTOLOGY PURSUES THE GOALS OF ANY RELIGIOUS QUEST

Every religion is a quest for salvation. Indeed, the need for a religion in the first place grows out of a recognition that things are not right in the human world. Every human being lives under a sentence of death that threatens to bring everything to naught. Cultural ideals and social institutions may enhance the individual's being and worth, but not universally and eternally. The causes which human beings espouse all fail. The empires which human beings construct all fall. But every religion promises a way through or around the disorder and destruction that seems to haunt all of human life. The world's religions differ among themselves over whether that "way" is an individual or a communal undertaking, a human or a divine achievement, an earthly or a heavenly reward. But every religion promises salvation from death and over death for all those who learn the spiritual lessons and master the spiritual disciplines of life.

Salvation is not limited to a final triumph over death in some other world or future life. Religions offer salvation from the mental confusion, physical distress and moral chaos that disrupts human life in this world and this life. Religions typically promise the power and provide the means for coping with all the marginal situations of life. Religions offer strength and comfort to persons who are taken to the limits of their analytic capacities, physical endurance and moral insight. In short, religions are built to carry the "peak loads" of human bafflement, suffering and perversity.

Like other religions, Scientology not only promises a solution to death but also provides a way of overcoming human bafflement, suffering and perversity. A standard definition of Scientology,

appearing in the flyleaf of most of its publications, directly addresses these three ultimate threats to well-being: “Scientology is an applied religious philosophy and technology resolving problems of the spirit, life and thought.” For Scientologists, these problems besetting the human race are ultimately spiritual rather than merely physical or mental. There is an underlying flaw of the spirit or, more properly, of the thetan, that weakens the body and darkens the mind. But Scientology promises a way to release the thetan from the subconscious memories of those catastrophes it has suffered in past lifetimes and those debilities it has suffered in this lifetime which dim its awareness and cripple its abilities. Thus, Scientology pursues the personal goal of clearing the human mind, body and spirit of all aberrations.

Like other religions, Scientology is a quest for salvation embracing life in a “world” to come as well as life in this world. Scientology’s quest for salvation centers in the process of spiritual counselling called *auditing*—a process which has similarities to Western confessional and Eastern meditative techniques. Auditing both cleanses and centers the inner life of the thetan. The first stages of auditing deal primarily with the spiritual dynamics of individual, family, social and historical life and are designed to produce healthy and happy human beings. The succeeding steps of auditing deepen the individual’s spiritual awareness and ability, finally freeing the thetan from all dependence upon the physical body and the material universe. In short, Scientology holds out the promise of happiness in this life and immortality for all those who cross its “Bridge to Total Freedom.”

Finally, Scientologists do not limit the promises of spiritual well-being achieved through Clearing to the isolated individual. The ultimate purpose of the spiritual technique of auditing is to “Clear the planet,” thereby creating a spiritual condition of universal benevolence and perpetual peace. In auditing, Scientology claims to have the “spiritual technology” for removing the underlying spiritual causes of all hostility and prejudice, all inequality and injustice, all warfare and exploitation. Only when the planet is thus cleared will human beings achieve a “civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war.”

### III.III. SCIENTOLOGY EXHIBITS THE DIMENSIONS OF ANY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

As the foregoing discussion shows, religion is not simply a private affair. Religion is a social and historical phenomenon, despite the fact that religions take their rise and find their home in the human heart. Individual religious experience grows out of a religious *community* which conserves and communicates that religion from one person to another and from one generation to the next. As such, every religious community is organized around four distinct and interrelated dimensions. Reflecting the fact that a religious tradition has theoretical and practical as well as individual

and social aspects, religious communities are structured as a system of religious *beliefs*, religious *practices*, religious *institutions* and religious *leaders*.

Like all religions, Scientology affirms a distinctive body of religious beliefs. Individual Scientologists assimilate these beliefs through extensive individual and group study of the philosophical, technical, ethical and creedal writings of L. Ron Hubbard. Indeed, these writings provide the authoritative source for Scientology's religious beliefs. Thus, Mr. Hubbard's writings function as sacred scripture, carrying the same authoritative force for Scientology as does the Bible for Christians, the Torah for Jews, the Qur'an for Muslims, the Book of Mormon for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures for the Christian Science Church. As such, Mr. Hubbard is regarded as the Founder of Scientology in a similar way that Mohammed is held as the Founder of Islam or Joseph Smith is regarded as the Founder of Mormonism.

Like other religions, Scientology maintains a distinctive body of religious practices. Scientologists celebrate the rites of marriage, christening, and burial according to the ceremonies of the Church of Scientology. But the heart of Scientology's religious life are the practices of spiritual *auditing* and *training*. Auditing and training make up the two sides of Scientology's Bridge to Total Freedom. Scientology auditing, which bears some resemblance to Christian confession and Buddhist meditation, is *not* simply another version of psychological counseling or psychoanalytic treatment. Auditing is that spiritual discipline whereby thetans are "cleared" of their "engrams"—are freed from those spiritual entrapments which darken the mind and weaken the body. This process of clearing occurs in sequential steps. Each stage of auditing achieves ever higher levels of spiritual awareness and ability. Indeed, when enough individuals have been cleared, the entire planet has a chance of also being cleared. In accordance with these individual and collective goals of auditing, Scientologists are also involved in the sacred mission of spreading the message of Scientology and of providing auditing for others. Like such other missionary religions as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, Scientology seeks to spread its message and means of salvation to the whole world and eventually throughout the universe. Scientology training is absolutely essential for the fulfillment of that worldwide mission, in addition to being essential for the adherent's own spiritual enlightenment. Training involves intensive and supervised study of the writings, lectures, and films of L. Ron Hubbard. Like auditing, training courses occur in sequential steps which are designed to deepen spiritual enlightenment and develop auditing technique. Finally, only an audited and trained Scientologist possesses the spiritual technology to guide others across the Bridge of Total Freedom.

Like all religions, Scientology has developed specialized social structures of organization and leadership for serving its members and spreading its message. Scientology is a voluntary

religious community that is formally organized around highly differential religious activities under rigorously hierarchical controls. Scientology's religious services are provided through five different kinds of religious centers, depending on the level of auditing and training available at a given center. Generally, the higher level organizations deliver all the services offered by lower level missions and churches. Scientology *missions* deliver all the "routes to the Bridge" as well as auditing on the lower "grade levels" to the state of Clear. Scientology *churches*, which are also called *Orgs* (short for "Organizations") and located in major cities, offer all "routes to the Bridge" as well as training through "Class V Graduate Auditor" and auditing to the state of "Clear." *Saint Hill Orgs* and *Advanced Orgs*, which are located in England, Los Angeles, Copenhagen, and Sydney, specialize in auditor training and intermediate "OT" (Operating Thetan) levels up through "OT V." Scientology's *Flag Service Org* in Clearwater, Florida, delivers all services to the highest levels of training and auditing through "OT VII." Finally, only *Flag Ship Service Organization* delivers the highest level of auditing, "OT VIII."

The Church of Scientology's hierarchical structure is based on religious grounds and serves religious purposes. The Church's corporate structure was designed to align with and complement the ecclesiastical structure. Most of the individual organizations are separately incorporated and operate under the guidance and authority of the Church of Scientology International, the mother church of the religion which is charged with the dissemination and propagation of the faith. Religious Technology Center is the body responsible for maintaining the "purity" of Scientology's applied religious philosophy and spiritual healing technology. In replicating a corporate model, the Church of Scientology reflects the dominant social institutions of its society, much as the Roman Catholic Church reflected medieval culture's feudal aristocracies and Protestant denominations reflected modern culture's capitalist democracies. But the particular organizational form that a given religion takes is clearly separable from the distinctive religious purposes that it serves.

Leadership in the Church of Scientology is based on the commanding religious vision and authority of L. Ron Hubbard. Unlike such ancient religious founders as Buddha and Jesus, Mr. Hubbard is not an object of religious worship among Scientologists, though he is accorded great religious admiration and affection. Rather, the applied religious philosophy and spiritual healing technology which he discovered and developed are alone vested with sanctity. Nevertheless, Scientologists see Mr. Hubbard as a singular figure in human and cosmic history since he alone has found a way through death and all those "pieces of death" that rob life of its natural health and happiness and its supernatural awareness and ability. Indeed, Scientologists believe that their Founder, who upon his death was freed from the limitations of his body and this earth, is carrying on his conquest of life "up the line at the other end of the Bridge."

Scientology has not developed the full range of religious specialists found in older religious traditions. There is no room for “healers” or “saints” and no need for “prophets” nor “reformers” according to Scientology’s beliefs and practices. But the generic roles of “priest” and “teacher” have been firmly established, though Scientologists refer to these religious functionaries as *ministers* and as *staff* of the Church of Scientology. Scientology ministers are duly ordained by the Church upon completion of a prescribed course of study and internship and, as ordained ministers, they are especially empowered to conduct Sunday services, weddings, christenings and burials as well as delivering the appropriate services of spiritual auditing and training. Scientology staff are trained for a variety of specialized teaching and management roles in the various levels and arms of church organizations. Some Scientology ministers and staff also belong to a special religious order called the *Sea Organization*, whose members contract to serve for a billion years and who work together to keep Scientology Missions and Churches moving individuals up the Bridge, thereby advancing the Church’s goal of clearing this planet and eventually the universe. Finally, Scientology also spreads its religious beliefs and practices through a highly dedicated and trained laity, who are also able to deliver spiritual auditing and appropriate levels to Scientology’s public.

### III.IV. CONCLUSION

By reason of my professional training and the scholarly research which is summarized above, I am convinced that Scientology is a religion in all respects of the word. To be sure, Scientology’s spiritual disciplines and institutional embodiments are distinctive, as befitting a new religion that seeks to combine the spirituality of Eastern religions and the historicity of Western religions in a “pan-denominational” movement that respects other religious traditions while transcending them. Nevertheless, Scientology clearly meets the scholarly definition of any religious tradition, clearly pursues the goals of any religious quest, and clearly exhibits the dimensions of any religious community.

## IV. AN ANALYSIS OF SCIENTOLOGY AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Worship is an intrinsic part of every religion, although the practice of worship differs from one religion to another. The insoluble bond between religion and worship is obvious in the common sense understanding of worship as adoring devotion and dedication. Such distinctive attitudes and actions are clearly implied in religion defined functionally as “a state of *ultimate* concern” or as “a means of *ultimate* transformation.” Worship is directed toward intense interests. Worshipful attitudes and actions are even more obvious in religion defined substantively as “alignment with

the *transcendent* ground of personal and social existence.” Worship is directed toward superhuman powers. On either definitional approach to religion, all religions begin and end in worship.

The range of attitudes and actions embraced in the concept of worship extends to the entire *active side of religion*. In its broadest scope, worship includes all rites, rituals, ceremonies, practices, observances, or services that occur within a sacred context and for a sacred purpose. Seen in this light, worship can run the gamut from public celebration to private contemplation, from solemn festivals to habitual routines. But the term “worship” is usually reserved for the intentional cultivation of persistent religious beliefs, values, and sentiments through a disciplined course of action. As such, worship involves the whole person in fixed patterns of divine service as defined by a specific religious tradition. Of course, religious traditions differ among themselves over the objects, forms, and occasions of worship, depending upon their distinctive understanding of the divine and the human reality.

#### IV.I. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP IN SCIENTOLOGY

In the long history of the religions, the objects of worship have included everything from supernatural beings to natural landmarks, from invisible powers to heroic individuals, from abstract principles to concrete symbols. But, as historian Arnold Toynbee has shown, this apparent variety among humankind’s worship can be reduced to *three* objects or objectives—Nature, Mankind, and an Absolute Reality that is neither Nature nor Mankind but is in them and at the same time beyond them.

Most historians of religion agree that the earliest forms of religion were rooted in the worship of natural phenomena or of parochial communities. The polytheisms of the ancient world were celebrations of the powers and possibilities of the natural environment or of the human world. These forms of worship have certainly not disappeared from the face of the earth. But the great “world religions” are all focused on worship of an Absolute Reality that transcends both nature and history.

This Absolute Reality is conceived in very different ways among the different religions. Broadly speaking, the Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam understand this Absolute Reality in personal terms. These traditions worship a personal Reality who can be known and served in a relational way. The worship of these theistic religions finally aims at communion with this personal Being. By contrast, again broadly speaking, the Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism conceive of this Absolute Reality in *impersonal* terms. These traditions worship a unitive Reality that can be understood and experienced in an inward manner. The worship of these monistic religions finally seek a *Union* with this impersonal Being.



Scientology clearly belongs among those religions whose worship is directed to an Absolute Reality that transcends the natural order and human existence while sustaining and fulfilling both. As noted above, the ultimate goal of the religious life in Scientology is survival “through a Supreme Being” or “as Infinity.” As we shall see, auditing and training are the primary forms of worship in the Church of Scientology. These worship activities equip and assist the Scientologist to survive and thrive across all eight dynamics. These spiritual exercises produce healthy and happy individuals, families and groups. But ultimately worship enables individual Scientologists to discover themselves as spiritual beings in a spiritual universe that radically transcends the physical body and the material world.

As such, Scientology’s understanding of Absolute Reality has more in common with the mystical traditions of Eastern religions than their theistic counterparts in the West. Though the Church of Scientology resolutely affirms the *existence* of God, it has no dogma concerning the *nature* of God. Scientologists are free to symbolize God in either personal or impersonal terms so long as they affirm the reality of God. For the most part, however, they think of God less as a personal Being who commands personal devotion and obedience than as a spiritual Force that invites individual exploration and discovery. God is to be found within rather than without, through individual experience rather than dogmatic teachings.

#### IV.II. THE FORMS OF WORSHIP IN SCIENTOLOGY

The forms of worship differ from one religion to another, depending upon a given religion’s distinctive understanding of the divine and human realities. But certain broad generalizations can be drawn between the forms of worship in Western and Eastern religious traditions. Unlike Western religious traditions where the disciplines of worship are focused on prayer and praise toward a personal God, the disciplines of worship in Eastern religions are centered in meditation and identification with an impersonal Absolute. The former religions celebrate a relationship between the individual and the Supreme Being, the latter establish the connection between the true self and ultimate Reality.

While Scientology is a distinctive religion with its own distinctive forms of worship, those forms have more in common with the spiritual disciplines of Eastern religions than the spiritual devotions of Western faiths. Like its Eastern counterparts, worship in the Church of Scientology is a highly disciplined and deeply cultivated process of self-examination and self-development. These spiritual exercises to increase individual awareness and ability are broadly divided into the two categories of auditing and training, the two sides of Scientology’s Bridge to Total Freedom.

Scientology auditing, which bears some resemblance to Christian confession and Buddhist meditation, is a form of spiritual counseling that enables a person to discover his or her identity as a spiritual being who has the potential of infinite survival. Auditing ranges from very simple to more searching religious experiences as one progresses higher and higher on the Bridge. Scientologists believe that the highest levels of spiritual awareness and ability can only be attained by progressing through graduated levels of auditing. The lower levels of auditing lead to the spiritual state of “clear,” in which a person is freed to live a sane and productive life, while the higher levels of auditing known as the “Operating Thetan” levels minister to the thetan’s ability to directly influence life, matter, energy, space and time.

Scientology training, which is similar to scriptural study and religious instruction in Judaism and Christianity as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism, augments the freedom achieved through spiritual auditing by knowledge achieved through religious education. The broad scope of training in Scientology is divided into numerous courses, ranging from lower level courses that teach basic principles to upper level courses that cover the full philosophic and technical materials of Dianetics and Scientology. In this sense, training offers just as much spiritual insight as does auditing. Indeed, the practice of faith for Scientologists is composed in equal parts of auditing and training in the principles and technology of Scientology. A person cannot achieve full spiritual awareness and empowerment without traveling up both sides of the Bridge to Total Freedom.

While the primary forms of worship in all religions are directed toward sacred objects and are expressive of spiritual experiences, there are other rituals that are routinely performed in the context and spirit of worship. Principle among these other practices are the rites of passage which mark the great moments of transition and transformation in individual and communal life. Every religion has its celebrations of the believer’s life cycle and of the tradition’s sacred history, and Scientology is no exception. Churches of Scientology regularly celebrate the rites of naming, marriage and burial according to the ceremonies of Scientology as well as commemorate the holy days in their faith’s sacred history and common life.

#### IV.III. THE OCCASIONS OF WORSHIP IN SCIENTOLOGY

In the history of religions, worship can occur on either private or public occasions. Worship is not restricted to the formal ceremonies and collective celebrations of a gathered religious community. Private worship is often found in the home where it is dependent on set times (such as meals or upon rising and retiring). The Christian’s daily devotionals, the Jew’s ritual benedictions, the Muslim’s daily prayers, the Hindu’s ceremonial chanting and the Buddhist’s sitting meditation are all authentic expressions of worship, though conducted in the privacy of one’s home or even in the solitude of one’s mind. But worship is also a public occasion, whether performed in concert with

others or merely in the company of others. Corporate worship is the norm for public worship in the theistic religions of the West. The people's words are presented to God in formalized prayers and praise, and God's word is proclaimed in return to the people in scripture and commentary. The pattern of public worship is somewhat different in the monistic religions of the East. To be sure, there are many elaborate ceremonies and festivals that are celebrated in a collective manner. But individual worshippers typically gather in public shrines, where each worshipper intones and enacts the prescribed ritual utterances and gestures as an act of personal devotion. On either pattern of public worship, the celebration of worship is dependent on a class of experts who are masters of the means and meaning of worship.

Similar to other religions, worship in the Church of Scientology may occur on private as well as public occasions. Auditing can occur in any quiet, distraction-free setting, such as at home. However, in such circumstances it is supervised by a highly trained Case Supervisor through use of a running written record of the auditing sessions. The vast majority of auditing takes place on Church premises where there are specially equipped rooms for this purpose and where the assistance of Case Supervisors and others is readily available to help in the scheduling and administration of these religious services. With the limited exception of home extension courses designed to guide one through the basic books of Dianetics and Scientology, all formal training is conducted on Church premises under trained Course Supervisors. Auditing at some of the upper levels, the "OT" levels, is conducted as "solo auditing." In this instance, a Scientologist follows exact instructions, auditing himself or herself alone as both the auditor and the person receiving the auditing. However, solo auditing is only done under the aegis of an Advanced Organization or Flag Service Organization where the written records of the auditing sessions are routinely reviewed by Case Supervisors to ensure that the auditing adheres to relevant Scriptures and that the expected spiritual gains are being attained. Although both auditing and training tend to be individual rather than group disciplines of worship in Scientology, this is no more unusual than a Buddhist practicing meditation in a Buddhist Center under the direction of a spiritual master or the rabbinic student studying Torah in a yeshiva under a Talmudic scholar.

On any reckoning of the occasions of worship—whether worship is private or public, solitary or corporate—the worship *center* plays an indispensable role in every religion. Such worship centers go by different names and exhibit different architectures. Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, ashrams, shrines have their own distinctive look and feel. But their religious purposes and functions are quite similar. These "places of worship" provide the sacred setting in which the "divine services" appropriate to a given religion are regularly conducted. Like any religion, Scientology churches have their own distinctive ambience. But they are the centers of both private and public worship services.

#### IV.IV. CONCLUSION

By reason of my professional training and the scholarly research summarized above, I am convinced that Scientology is a worshipping community. As befitting a new religion, the Church of Scientology's forms of worship are distinctive in accordance with its distinctive understanding of the divine and human realities. But, similar to other religious traditions, Scientology's worship is intended to deepen the spiritual awareness and develop the spiritual ability of the individual, the family, the community, and ultimately the world.

LONNIE D. KLIEVER

*26 September 1994*

