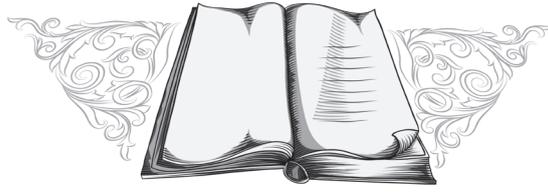


SCIENTOLOGY:
AN ANALYSIS AND
COMPARISON
of its
RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS
AND DOCTRINES

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I. THE DIVERSITY OF RELIGIONS AND THE PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

I.I. ELEMENTS OF THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

There is no one definitive definition of religion that is generally accepted by scholars. Among the many definitions that have been advanced there are, however, a number of elements that are frequently invoked. These elements appear in various combinations. They include:

- (a) Beliefs, practices, relationships and institutions relative to:
- 1) supernatural forces, beings, or goals;
 - 2) higher unseen power or powers;
 - 3) man's ultimate concern;
 - 4) sacred things (things set apart and forbidden);
 - 5) an object of spiritual devotion;
 - 6) an agency that controls man's destiny;
 - 7) the ground of being;
 - 8) a source of transcendent knowledge and wisdom;



(b) Practices which constitute obedience, reverence or worship;

(c) The collective or group character of religious life.

Although causes are rarely included in definitions of religion, “an experiential encounter with the spiritual” is sometimes indicated. The consequences and functions of religion are indicated as:

(a) maintenance of a moral community;

(b) the conferment of group and/or individual identity;

(c) a framework of orientation;

(d) a humanly constructed universe of meaning;

(e) reassurance and comfort respecting prospects of help and salvation.

Religion is always normative, but since each religion differs from others, modern specialists in the sociology of religion and comparative religion seek to discuss the normative without themselves becoming committed to it. Such is the diversity of patterns of belief, ritual, and organization, however, that any definition of religion is strained in attempting to encompass all the manifestations of religion that are known.

I.II. THE ORIGINAL USE OF THE CONCEPT

The concept “religion” was formerly often identified with actual concrete manifestations of beliefs and practices in Western society. Apart from Christians, Jews and Muslims, it was generally held that other peoples had no religion in the proper sense. They were “heathens.” Theologians who used the term “religion” tended to mean by it Christianity, and in England reference to “Christianity” was often taken to mean that faith as purveyed specifically by the Church of England. That restricted usage has steadily receded as more has become known of oriental belief-systems, and as the study of religion has transcended the narrow normative prescriptive restraints of traditional Christian theology. Religion has become an object of study for academic disciplines—in particular the social sciences—which approach that subject objectively and neutrally and without any implication of adherence to any one particular religion, or a preference for one above another.

I.III. CULTURAL BIAS AND THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The development of a thoroughgoing neutrality in the study of religion was achieved only slowly, however. Some contemporary studies in comparative religion still manifest evident bias. Even in the social sciences, explicitly committed to value-free enquiry, certain prejudices are apparent in work done in the inter-war years. In particular, it was often gratuitously assumed that there had occurred a process of religious evolution analogous to that of biological evolution and that the religion of the most advanced nations was necessarily “higher” than that of other peoples. For some (conspicuously Sir James Frazer) it was believed that religion was an evolutionary step on the road from magic to science.

I.IV. CONTEMPORARY USAGE

Today social scientists and increasingly theologians employ the concept as a neutral expression, no longer implying any *a priori* assumptions about the greater truth of one religion over another. It is not now assumed that belief in one deity is necessarily a higher form of religion than belief in several deities or in none. It is recognized that a religion may postulate an anthropomorphic god, some other form of deity, a supreme being, a plurality of spirits or ancestors, a universal principle or law, or some other expression of ultimate belief. Some Christian theologians such as Bultmann, Tillich, van Buren and Robinson have abandoned traditional depictions of deity, and prefer to refer to “the ground of being” or “ultimate concern.”

I.V. EXTENSION OF THE CONCEPT

As anthropologists came to maintain that there was no clear instance of a society that lacked all forms of supernatural beliefs and institutions that supported such beliefs, so they concluded that, in the wider sense of the term, there was no society without religion. The concept “religion” came to connote phenomena that had family resemblance rather than shared identity, and religion ceased to be defined in terms specific to one particular tradition. The concrete items that pertained to Christianity, and which had been regarded as essential to the definition of religion, were now seen to be merely examples of what a definition might include. The specification of such concrete elements was superseded by more abstract formulations which embraced a variety of types of beliefs, practices and institutions which, although far from intrinsically identical, could be regarded as functional equivalents. Every society was perceived to have beliefs that, although diverse, transcended known empirical reality and had practices designed to bring men into contact or rapport with the supernatural. In most

societies, there were people who undertook the special functions associated with respect to this goal. Together, these elements came to be recognized as constituting religion.

I.VI. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN SIMPLE SOCIETIES

In relatively small, tribal societies there are often rites and myths of considerable complexity which do not usually constitute one consistent, internally integrated and coherent system. Religion undergoes change, and accretion occurs in both myth and ritual as a society experiences contact with neighbouring or invading peoples. Different rites and beliefs may be attached to different situations (e.g., to induce rain, to ensure fertility in crops, animals and women; to provide protection; to cement alliances; to initiate age-groups or individuals, etc.). All such activities are directed towards supernatural agencies (however defined) and they are recognized by scholars as religious.

I.VII. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN ADVANCED SOCIETIES

The codes of religious belief and practice in technically more advanced societies are generally more elaborately articulated and display greater internal coherence and stability, but even in advanced systems, elements of diversity persist. No theological system or schematization of beliefs pertaining to the supernatural, in any of the world's great religions, is wholly coherent. There are always unexplained residues. There are also remnants of earlier religious orientations such as folk religious elements which persist among the general populace. The sacred scriptures of all major religions manifest internal contradictions and inconsistencies. These and other sources give rise to differences among religious specialists who embrace different and at times irreconcilable interpretative schemes and exegetical principles, which feed different traditions even within what is broadly acknowledged to be orthodoxy.

I.VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

In advanced societies, deliberate and conscious dissent from orthodoxy must be regarded as a normal phenomenon. Christians, Jews and Muslims are divided, not only within orthodoxy, but by dissentient groups which reject all forms of orthodoxy and which follow a divergent pattern of religious practice (or who reject religion altogether). Dissent is most conspicuous in contexts in which religious exclusivity prevails: that is to say, in which the individual is required, if adhering to one religion, to renounce allegiance to all others—a pattern of commitment rigorously required in the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions. As state governments have ceased to prescribe specific forms of religion, dissenting religious bodies have been both

tolerated and granted certain general religious privileges in European countries, and have come in many cases to enjoy the general freedom of religion embraced constitutionally in the United States. The situation which obtains today of a large number of different denominations operating side-by-side is known as “religious pluralism.”

I.IX. NORMATIVE AND NEUTRAL APPROACHES TO RELIGION

A religion characteristically sets out certain stories (myths) and propositions respecting the supernatural which are expected to command belief. It prescribes ritual performances. It sustains institutions (in the broad sense of regulated relationships, whether at a rudimentary personal level or as a complex system of behaviour, procedures and property-maintenance). It sometimes also stipulates rules of moral conduct, although the rigour of such stipulation and the sanctions attached to morality vary considerably. But, at least, religion defines obligations and promises rewards for conformity in the shape of supernaturally provided benefits. Religion constitutes a normative system. Religious teachers (“theologians” in Christianity—but the term is inappropriate for some other religions) necessarily endorse and enjoin these norms. In contrast, social scientists regard the values which a religion canvasses merely as facts, neither endorsing nor denying their warrant or their worth. This approach resembles that of those formulations of the law which declare that the law does not discriminate among religions. Because religion is normative and intellectually has been mainly the preserve of theologians, there is, in all advanced societies, an inheritance of learned language about religion which bears the normative stamp of religious commitment. It is deemed essential here to avoid the value-preference implicit in such language and to employ the neutral terminology of the social sciences, whilst seeking to maintain an appropriate sensitivity to those engaged in religious activity.

I.X. ‘BORROWED’ NOMENCLATURE

Early definitions and descriptions of the essentials of religion frequently used terms borrowed from the religious traditions of those who formulated them. It is now recognized that the use of terms peculiar to one religion must distort the depiction of other religions, and may frequently involve false assumptions. Concepts evolved within one cultural and religious tradition will misrepresent the functionally equivalent but formally distinctive elements of religion in another. Instances of such inappropriate usage include reference to “the Buddhist church”, “the Muslim priesthood” or, in reference to the Trinity, “Christian gods.” Similarly, although acts of reverence, obeisance, contemplation, or dedication occur in all advanced religions, commentators have not always recognized them as worship because, in Western

usage, that term has been heavily loaded with Christian preconceptions and prescriptions concerning appropriate attitudes and actions. For example, the functional equivalent of Christian worship in cultivating the dispositions of worshippers occurs in Buddhism but its form is different and it is normally described by other terms. Thus, if religions are to be accorded parity, it becomes necessary to adopt abstract definitive terms to encompass the diversity of religious phenomena.

I.XI. THE INHERENT DEFICIENCY OF ABSTRACT OR OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

This use of abstract language, which may be regarded as “clinical” in the sense of not being contaminated by the particular traditions of any one religion, will necessarily fail to capture all the intrinsic qualities of any specific faith but it is a necessity if an appraisal is to be achieved. It will exhaust neither the cognitive nor the emotional aspects of belief, ritual, symbolism and institutions. This social scientific approach makes possible objective comparison and explanation, but it does not, and does not pretend to, convey the whole substance of the inner meaning or emotional appeal that a religion has for its own adherents.

II. THE INDICIA OF RELIGION

II.I. THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGION

In accordance with the foregoing considerations, we may now indicate, in abstract and general terms, the principal characteristics of religion. What follows does not purport to be a universally applicable definition so much as the enumeration of features and functions which are frequently found in religion, and which are identified as such. These are:

- (a) belief in an agency (or agencies) which transcend(s) normal sense perception and which may even include an entire postulated order of being;
- (b) belief that such an agency not only affects the natural world and the social order, but operates directly upon it and may even have created it;
- (c) the belief that at some times in the past explicit supernatural intervention in human affairs has occurred;

- (d) supernatural agencies are held to have superintended human history and destiny: when these agencies are anthropomorphically depicted they are usually credited with definite purposes;
- (e) the belief is maintained that man's fortune in this life and in afterlife (or lives) depends on relationships established with, or in accordance with, these transcendental agencies;
- (f) it is often (but not invariably) believed that whilst transcendent agencies may arbitrarily dictate an individual's destiny, the individual may, by behaving in prescribed ways, influence his experience either in this life or in future life (lives) or both;
- (g) there are prescribed actions for individual, collective or representative performances—namely, rituals;
- (h) elements of placatory action persist (even in advanced religions) by which individuals or groups may supplicate for special assistance from supernatural sources;
- (i) expressions of devotion, gratitude, obeisance or obedience are offered by, or in some cases, are required of believers, usually in the presence of symbolic representations of the supernatural agency(ies) of the faith;
- (j) language, objects, places, edifices, or seasons that are particularly identified with the supernatural become sacralized and may themselves become objects of reverence;
- (k) there are regular performances of ritual or exposition, expressions of devotion, celebration, fasting, collective penance, pilgrimage and reenactments or commemorations of episodes in the earthly life of deities, prophets or great teachers;
- (l) occasions of worship and exposition of teachings produce the experience of a sense of community and relationships of goodwill, fellowship and common identity;
- (m) moral rules are often enjoined upon believers, although the area of their concern varies: they may be couched in legalistic and ritualistic terms, or they may be canvassed more as conformity with the spirit of a less specific, higher ethic;

- (n) seriousness of purpose, sustained commitment and lifelong devotion are normative requirements;
- (o) according to their performance, believers accumulate merit or demerit to which a moral economy of reward and punishment is attached. The precise nexus between action and consequence varies from automatic effects from given causes to the belief that personal demerit may be cancelled by devotional and ritual acts, by confession and repentance, or by special intercession from supernatural agents;
- (p) there is usually a special class of religious functionaries who serve as custodians of sacred objects, scriptures, and places; specialists in doctrine, ritual and pastoral guidance;
- (q) such specialists are usually paid for their services, whether by tribute, reward for specific services, or by instituted stipend;
- (r) when specialists devote themselves to the systematization of doctrine, the claim is regularly made that religious knowledge provides solutions for all problems, and explains the meaning and purpose of life, often including purported explanations of the origin and operation of the physical universe and of human psychology;
- (s) legitimacy is claimed for religious knowledge and institutions by reference to revelation and tradition: innovation is regularly justified as restoration; and
- (t) claims to the truth of teaching and efficacy of ritual are not subjected to empirical test, since goals are ultimately transcendent and faith is demanded both for goals and for the arbitrary means recommended for their attainment.

The foregoing items are not to be regarded as *sine qua non*, but as probabilities: they constitute phenomena frequently found empirically. It may be regarded as a probabilistic inventory.

II.II. NON-ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGION

The foregoing inventory is set forth in terms of considerably abstract generalization, but actual religions are historical entities, not logical constructs. They encompass widely different organizing principles, codes of conduct and patterns of belief. At many points, generalization

is not easy, and once the (often unconscious) prejudices of the Christian tradition are set aside, it becomes apparent that many of the concrete items which, on the basis of the Christian model, might be supposed to be the *sine qua non* of religion, are, in fact, not found in other systems. In the foregoing inventory, allusion to a supreme being is avoided, since for Theravada Buddhists (and for many Mahayana Buddhists), Jains and Taoists that concept has no validity. Worship, referred to above, has very different implications in Buddhism from those which it carries for worshippers in Christianity. The inventory makes no reference to creeds, which are of peculiar importance in the Christian tradition, but are not of such importance in other religions. It does not mention the soul, vital as is that concept in orthodox Christianity, because the doctrine of the soul is somewhat dubious in Judaism, and is explicitly denied by some Christian movements (e.g., the Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses—each of which bodies has millions of adherents throughout the world, and by Christadelphians and those Puritans, including Milton, who were known as moralists). There is no direct reference to hell in any sense of the idea developed in Christianity, since this item is lacking in Judaism. The afterlife is alluded to in the singular or the plural to accommodate the two variant Christian ideas of transmigration of the soul and of the resurrection, and the somewhat different accounts of reincarnation in Buddhism and Hinduism. None of these specific items can be considered essential to the definition of religion *tout court*.

III. NON-THEISTIC BELIEF SYSTEMS

III.I. THEISM IS NOT AN ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF RELIGION

It is beyond challenge that theism (i.e., monotheism, polytheism and pantheism) is not an essential characteristic of religion. Indeed, both scholars and the lay public generally regard as religions belief systems that are clearly non-theistic. Examples of such religions are given below.

III.II. BUDDHISM—A NON-THEISTIC RELIGION

Buddhism is not a system of theistic belief but is generally recognized as a religion, even though it contrasts sharply with Christianity. Whilst Buddhism does not deny the existence of gods, these beings are not credited with a role in any way approaching that of a supreme being or creator. Even in the Pure Land sects of Japan (Jodoshu and Jodoshinshu), in which there is an emphatic commitment to the idea of the Buddha himself as a saviour, this conception falls short of regarding the Buddha as a creator-god.

III.III. THE DOCTRINES OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Theravada Buddhism is often considered to be the tradition of Buddhism closest to the original teachings of Gautama Buddha. Its doctrines bear little resemblance to the theses set forth in Christianity or other monotheistic religions. None of the teachings of Theravada Buddhism indicate the existence of a supreme being or a creator-god. Rather than being the product of a creator-god, the phenomenal world is seen as being without substance, and man is held to be equally impermanent, and is not believed to have an immortal soul. All existence is characterized by suffering, and the impulse of Buddhist teaching is to liberate man from this condition. Man's present circumstance is a consequence of his karma, the law of cause and effect according to which deeds in past lives almost totally determine the experience of subsequent lives. Since lives are like links in a causal chain, there is a "conditional origination" of each rebirth. Thus, man is not brought into being by a creator-god, nor is there any conception of a saviour-god, since only enlightenment will allow man to become liberated from the suffering of the chain of rebirths. Each man, under the guidance of religious instruction, must tread the path of enlightenment for himself. Buddhism does not deny the existence of gods as such, but these beings are not objects of worship, and they fulfil no special role. (They are residues and accretions from other religious traditions which Buddhism has accommodated.) Although conceptions of a creator-god and a saviour-god, immortal soul, and eternal punishment or glory are all lacking in Theravada Buddhism, none the less, Buddhism is readily and universally accorded the status of a world religion.

III.IV. JAINISM IS AN ATHEISTIC RELIGION

Jainism is a recognized religion in India and in other countries where it is practised, and is normally included in the list of (usually eleven) great religions. Of it, Sir Charles Eliot has written, "Jainism is atheistic, and this atheism is as a rule neither apologetic nor polemical, but is accepted as a natural religious attitude." Jains do not, however, deny the existence of *devas*, deities, but these beings are, like human beings, considered to be subject to the laws of transmigration and decay, and they do not determine the destiny of man. Jains believe that souls are individual and infinite. They are not part of a universal soul. Souls and matter are neither created nor destroyed. Salvation is to be attained by the liberation of the soul from the foreign elements (karmas) that weigh it down—elements that gain admission to the soul by the individual's acts of passion. Such action causes rebirth among animals or inanimate substances: meritorious acts cause rebirth among the *devas*. Anger, pride, deceit and greed are the main obstacles to liberation of the soul, but man is master of his own destiny. By subduing the self and by doing harm to no being, and by leading an ascetic life, he may achieve rebirth

as a deva. The moral rules for the devout believer are to show kindness without hope of return; to rejoice in the welfare of others; to seek to relieve the distress of others; and to show sympathy for the criminal. Self-mortification annihilates accumulated karma.

III.V. THE SANKHYA SCHOOL OF HINDUISM—A NON-THEISTIC RELIGION

The Hindu religion acknowledges as orthodox six ancient and divergent schools. One of these, Sankhya, is neither theistic nor pantheistic. Like Jainism, Sankhya teaches that primordial matter and the individual soul are both uncreated and indestructible. The soul may be liberated by knowing the truth about the universe and by control of the passions. In some texts, Sankhya denies the existence of a personal supreme deity, and, in any case, any concept of deity is regarded as superfluous and potentially self-contradictory, since the working of karma governs man's affairs up to that point where he himself can determine that he seeks liberation. The four goals of Sankhya are similar to those of Buddhism: to know suffering, from which man must liberate himself; to bring about the cessation of suffering; to perceive the cause of suffering (the failure to discriminate between soul and matter); and to learn the means of liberation, namely, discriminating knowledge. Like other schools, Sankhya teaches the karmic principle: rebirth is a consequence of one's actions, and salvation is escape from the cycle of rebirths.

III.VI. THE NON-THEISTIC CHARACTER OF SANKHYA

Sankhya embraces a form of dualism that does not revolve around the existence of a god or gods. This is not the Christian dualism of good and evil, but a radical distinction between soul and matter. Both are uncreated, infinitely existing items. The world results from the evolution of matter. The soul, however, is unchanging. The soul suffers because it is in captivity to matter, yet this captivity is an illusion. Once the soul is aware that it is not part of the material world, the world ceases to exist for that particular soul, and it is free. According to Sankhya theory, matter undergoes evolution, dissolution and quiescence. In evolving, matter produces intellect, individuality, the senses, moral character, will, and a principle which survives death and which undergoes transmigration. By being connected with soul, the physical organism becomes a living being. Only in this connection is consciousness realised: neither matter on its own nor soul on its own is conscious. Although the soul is a vitalizing element, it is not itself the life which ends in death, nor is it life which is transmitted from one existence to another. Although it does not itself act or suffer, the soul reflects the suffering that occurs, much as a mirror reflects. It is not the intellect, but is an infinite and passionless entity. Souls are innumerable and distinct from one another. The goal is for the soul to free itself from illusion and so from captivity. Once liberated,

the condition of the soul is equivalent to Nirvana in Buddhism. Such liberation might occur before death, and the task of the liberated one is to teach others. After death, there is a possibility of total liberation without threat of rebirth. Sankhya makes no objection to belief in popular divinities, but these are not part of its operative order. It is knowledge of the universe which produces salvation. In this sense, control of the passions, and not moral conduct, is central. Good works can produce only a lower form of happiness. Nor is sacrifice efficacious. Neither ethics nor rituals are of great importance to the Sankhya scheme of things.

III.VII. THE INADEQUACY OF A THEISTIC CRITERION

From the foregoing examples of religious belief systems, it is apparent that belief in a supreme being or any form of theism is an inadequate criterion of religion. Despite the lingering, out-dated prejudice of some Christian commentators, this point would generally be immediately endorsed by comparative religionists and sociologists of religion. Status as a religion would not be denied to Buddhism, Jainism or the Sankhya School of Hinduism, the absence of any conception of a supreme being or creator god notwithstanding.

III.VIII. THE CASE OF TAOISM

Taoism, too, has generally been recognised as a religion, and text books of comparative religion usually include it, despite the difficulty of rendering its central beliefs in a coherent form. In contrast to revealed religions, Taoism drew on nature worship, mysticism, fatalism, political quietism, magic and ancestor worship. It was officially recognized as an organized religion in China for centuries, with temples, worship, and clergy. It acquired conceptions of supernatural beings, including the Jade Emperor, Lao-Tzu, Ling Po (marshall of supernatural beings), together with the Eight Immortals of Chinese folklore, the City God, the God of the Hearth, among others, together with innumerable spirits. Taoism lacks, however, a supreme creator, a saviour-god of the Christian kind and an articulated theology and cosmology.

IV. RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

IV.I. THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS

The case of Taoism illustrates the fact that religions do not arise fully-fledged as systems of belief, practice and organization. They undergo processes of evolution in all these respects, sometimes

coming to embrace elements entirely at variance with earlier positions. For example, for decades some bishops of the Church of England have openly dissented from belief in such central tenets of the faith as the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus, and the second coming. Another such example is the changing conception of God as evident in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, from the tribal deity of the ancient Israelites to a much more spiritually conceived and universal being in the writings of the later prophets and in the New Testament. Reconciliation of the divergent depictions of deity have given rise to disputes within and between churches and movements in Christianity, and the fundamental assumptions have steadily shifted over Christian history. Fundamental changes over the concept of the Christian God are occurring even today.

IV.II. RECENT THEOLOGICAL REAPPRAISAL OF GOD

One such important current of thought which has profound implications for the status of Christianity, and which has some bearing on the matters at issue, is the widely canvassed refutation of the idea that there can be a supreme being of the kind traditionally acclaimed by the Christian Church. This current of opinion, promoted by some of the most distinguished theologians, comes, in particular, from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich. For present purposes, it may be best exemplified from its most popular and influential expression. In 1963, the then (Anglican) Bishop of Woolwich, J.A.T. Robinson, summarized this current of theological thought in his bestselling book, *Honest to God*. The Bishop set out the arguments for the abandonment of the idea of God as a personal being who existed “out there” and challenged the whole idea of “Christian theism.”

IV.III. EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIAN ATHEISM—ROBINSON

The following extracts make apparent the extent to which the Bishop and his associates departed from traditional assumptions respecting monotheism as entertained by both the laity and the law.

The Bishop cited Bonhoeffer in support of his arguments, as follows:

Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis. In questions concerning science, art, and even ethics, this has become an understood thing which one scarcely dares to tilt at any more. But for the last hundred years or so it has been increasingly true of religious questions also: it is becoming evident that everything gets along without ‘God’ just as before. (p. 36)

From Tillich, the Bishop cites the following:

...you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even the word itself. (p. 47)

To which the Bishop adds:

When Tillich speaks of God 'in depth,' he is not speaking of another Being at all. He is speaking of 'the infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being...' (p. 46)

For himself the Bishop says:

...as he (Tillich) says, theism as ordinarily understood 'has made God a heavenly, completely perfect person who presides over the world and mankind' (p. 39)...I am convinced that Tillich is right in saying that the protest of atheism against such a highest person is correct. (p. 41)

The Bishop quotes the lay theological writer, John Wren-Lewis, approvingly:

It is not merely that the Old Man in the Sky is only a mythological symbol for the Infinite Mind behind the scenes, nor yet that this Being is benevolent rather than fearful: the truth is that this whole way of thinking is wrong, and if such a Being did exist, he would be the very devil. (pp. 42-3)

Reinforcing this point, the Bishop says:

We shall eventually be no more able to convince men of the existence of a God 'out there' whom they must call in to order their lives than persuade them to take seriously the gods of Olympus. (p. 43)...to say that 'God is personal' is to say that personality is of ultimate significance in the constitution of the universe, that in personal relationships we touch the final meaning of existence as nowhere else. (pp. 48-9)

Distinguishing, as theologians do, between reality and existence, the Bishop was asserting that God was ultimately real, but that he did not exist, since to exist was to be finite in space and time, to be part of the universe.

IV.IV. EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIAN ATHEISM—VAN BUREN

In the same year, 1963, Paul van Buren, an American theologian, wrote *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, which also canvassed Bonhoeffer's concept of "religionless Christianity" i.e., that Christianity is not a religion. Even more strongly than Robinson, van Buren demanded that Christianity no longer be understood as in any sense committed to a belief in God. He proposed that all theological reference to God be eliminated. He held that "...simple literal theism is wrong, and qualified literal theism is meaningless" (p. 100). On the other hand, one might continue to hold to the humanity of the man, Jesus, "...the issue of his divinity fall where it may." Christian atheism was the name given to the theology propounded by van Buren. The Gospels were not about God, they were about Jesus, and Jesus was to be recognized as a man. Thus, all claim that Christianity was a religion with a commitment to a supreme being was abandoned by Professor van Buren, just as such claims were also relinquished by the theologians of the contemporaneous "Death of God" school, which represented another current of theological thinking.

IV.V. THE REAPPRAISAL OF JESUS

Reinterpretation of the New Testament and of the person of Jesus had also been in progress in theological circles, certainly from the time of Albert Schweitzer, who, in 1906, published a work under the translated English title of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Schweitzer revealed Jesus as a Jewish prophet with somewhat misguided ideas and very much a creature of his time. A more radical process of critical "demythologizing" was undertaken by Rudolf Bultmann, who, beginning in the 1940s, showed how fully the Gospels were subject to the myths prevailing at the time at which they were written. He went on to demonstrate how few of the concepts employed in the Gospels could be accepted by twentieth-century man. Bultmann himself sought to preserve a message for mankind from the New Testament very much in the terms of German existentialist philosophy. Christianity became a guide for the moral life of the individual, but it was no longer credible as a body of teaching about God's creation and his governance of the world. The increasing effect of Bultmann's work was to raise new doubts about the traditional claim that Jesus was God in the flesh. Doubt was now cast on the entire Christological teaching of the Church. The historical relativism of this approach found renewed expression in a work entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate* (edited by Professor John Hick), published in 1977, in which a number of the most distinguished of Anglican theologians disputed the traditional Chalcedonian view of the relationship of God to the man, Jesus. Modern theologians were finding it difficult to believe that God

had become man in the way in which Christian teaching had affirmed during the previous fifteen centuries.

IV.VI. CHRISTIANITY SAID NOT TO BE A RELIGION

These various currents of theological argument—the considered rejection of the concept of a personal God; the relinquishment of theism; the new emphasis on the relativism of the Bible; and the challenge to accepted concepts of the nature of Christ and his relation to the godhead—all amount to a severe departure from the received understanding of Christian faith. Christianity, for so long the implicit model in Europe for the conception of what a religion was expected to be like, was now declaring itself not to be a religion. In this way, the criteria by which religion had previously been defined was now brought into question.

V. THE SOCIAL AND MORAL FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION

V.I. CONTEMPORARY RELIGION AND CHANGING SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Turning from the concrete elements derived from the traditional but apparently outmoded Christian conception of what might constitute a religion, we may briefly refer to the characteristics of religion emphasized in the non-normative sociological studies of the subject. Whilst not ignoring the importance of the substantive concern with the supernatural (or superempirical), social scientists emphasize the functions which religions fulfil. A religion creates, reinforces, or promotes social solidarity in the group and provides that group with a sense of identity. It provides, in the words of Peter Berger, “a humanly constructed universe of meaning,” which becomes an intellectual and moral framework in the light of which ideas and actions can be judged. If religion necessarily abandons—in the face of the development of science—specific theories of creation and cosmology, it continues to offer explanation of what purposes inhere in the universe and in the life of man.

V.II. CONTEMPORARY RELIGION AND THE ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY

As the general populace of the Western world has become more educated, modern religions have tended to emphasize less the doctrines concerning God, creation, sin, incarnation, resurrection, etc., and to place more stress on such things as an ethic of social and personal responsibility; the provision of a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose; the source of personal guidance; and the way to personal fulfilment in this world.

V.III. CONTEMPORARY RELIGION AND CONCERN WITH SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Increased concern about pastoral care began in mid-nineteenth century in Britain, but it is now manifested in many new forms of specialized pastoral ministry, such as industrial chaplaincy, and work in hospitals and prisons, and in specialized counselling, for example, in marriage guidance, Christian healing, and work for addicts and potential suicides. Advice on physical and psychic health, sexual and familial problems, education and work relationships have become almost staple matter in much religious literature in many denominations, and conspicuously so in relatively recently established sects and denominations.

V.IV. CONTEMPORARY RELIGION AND LIFE-ENHANCEMENT

In some new religious movements the claim to provide people with a sense of meaning and purpose in life has become an explicit focus. Such movements generally provide a comprehensive, and often complex, system of metaphysics within which their votaries find intellectual answers to questions of ultimate concern. Such movements would include Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Gurdjieffism, the Kosmon Faith and New Thought movements. As the emphasis in contemporary society has shifted from concern with the afterlife, new movements (and in some measure older-established churches) have come to emphasize “this-worldly” activities and purposes, and general goals of “life enhancement.” The asceticism of religions that grew up in a world of scarcity and natural disaster is less congruous in a society in which there is a heightened affluence and much more extensive social planning to eliminate or mitigate natural and social calamities. The contemporary currency of hedonistic values in secular society is reflected in religion, and new religions explicitly seek to provide people with better experience of life. An emphasis on positive thinking became widely current in America in the 1940s.

Psychological techniques for heightened self-control, self-improvement, renewed motivation, and wider capacity for spiritual enrichment have become part of the repertoire of many religious movements as society has moved away from endorsement of the sin-laden theologies that were once canvassed by traditional Christian churches.

V.V. THE RELATION OF RELIGION AND MORALITY

Many religions prescribe rules of greater or lesser degrees of specificity for the observance of adherents. Their nature, the vigour with which they are prescribed and the stringency of the

sanctions attached to them, vary widely. In Judaism, rules govern the minutiae of ritual and many contingencies of everyday life. In Islam, religious rules affect diverse life situations and provide a system of legal regulation for society. Elsewhere, moral regulation is not derived from explicitly religious roots—as in the case of Japanese society. There is no normal relationship between a system of religious doctrine and a code of morals. The conjunction of religion and morals in Christianity is one pattern of relationship, but this pattern is not typical for other religious systems, and it cannot be assumed as a necessary model for such a relationship.

V. VI. BUDDHISM AND MORALITY

For example, in Theravada Buddhism there are prescriptions for monks, and a few general rules enjoined upon the laity. A Buddhist has a duty not to kill, to steal, to lie, to commit wrongful sexual acts and to drink intoxicants. The Buddha offered moral advice concerning household duties, behaviour towards friends and care of one's spouse, but these are exhortations to what might be called social common sense. The individual is to be prudent, thrifty, industrious, to be fair to servants and to choose as friends those who will restrain him from wrong and exhort him to right conduct. These virtues are enjoined as enlightened self-interest; they are not underwritten with the concept of sin as canvassed in Christianity. Disregard of these virtues does not meet with special punishments, except in the sense of producing bad karma. To avoid evil doing in Buddhism is a matter of enlightened self-interest (at least in the long term). Religion itself prescribes no sanctions. There is no wrathful deity. However, since actions are deemed to determine status in some future reincarnation, good acts are advisable as being in accordance with the eightfold path of enlightenment, since they will lead to rebirths in better circumstances and putatively to the eventual transcendence of all rebirths and the attainment of Nirvana. Thus, while Buddhism certainly canvasses ethical values, the individual is left considerable freedom in his moral comportment, and is not subject to the type of moral censure which has prevailed in Christian contexts.

V. VII. CHRISTIANITY AND MORALITY

In sharp contrast, traditional Christianity, among its various levels of ethical teaching, includes an elaborate code of prohibitions, transgression of which came to be regarded as sin. The minimal commandments of early Judaism respecting major offences were augmented by prescriptions of a much more demanding tenor, particularly with respect to sexuality, and this from both Jesus and Paul. There were also counsels of perfection of a perhaps unrealizable kind ("Be ye therefore perfect," and more specifically, commands to love one's enemies, to forgive "seventy-and-seven" times, to turn the other cheek, etc.). But it was in the concept of

sin that Christianity came to elaborate an exacting moral code. Man was held to be inherently sinful, a dire condition from which only the exemplary virtue and superhuman sacrifice of Christ could redeem him. The defects indicated in the Old Testament (failures in ritual; false motivation; injustice; idolatry; disobedience of God) were extended to defects in responsibility, and fundamental deficiency in human character and conscience. Although the created universe was not seen as inherently sinful by Augustine, man was sinful and the character of sin was essentially privative. This view informed medieval Catholicism.

The institution of auricular confession, the development of an elaborate procedure for penances, and later the elaboration of the concept of Purgatory, indicated the severity with which sin was regarded. But whereas Catholicism, whilst vigorously pronouncing against sin, none the less recognized the frailty of humankind, and accommodated it by the institution of the confessional, Protestantism rejected this device for the relief of guilt. Calvinism intensified the personal anguish of sinners, and is credited with having developed a system of theology which led to the internalization of moral control and to conscience formation.

V.VIII. CHANGES IN THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO SIN

Only in the nineteenth century did the Christian preoccupation with sin begin to abate. Steadily in the course of that century, the Christian preoccupation with hell and damnation receded, but by this time secular morality had acquired an autonomous influence on public life. In the twentieth century, the severity of Victorian morality was steadily tempered, until in the 1960s the severe demands, particularly in the area of sexual conduct, gave place to moral permissiveness. Thus it is evident that the postulated model of the relationship between religion and morality is one that has been far from constant even in the case of Christianity. Nor does this measure of variety exist only over time. It can also be exemplified among contemporaneous denominations. The moral attitudes found among present-day evangelicals (who are to be found in several denominations including the Church of England) continue to manifest a strong preoccupation with personal sin in many areas of conduct. In contrast, the idea of sin has become almost outmoded among many liberal churchmen, some of whom reject entirely the claims of an absolute moral code such as has traditionally been adopted by Christian churches, preferring commitment to situation ethics, the implications of which must often conflict radically with received Christian moral precepts. Another, quite different attitude, is adopted in Christian Science, in which sin is regarded merely as error proceeding from a false apprehension of reality, and which, together with sickness, is believed to be eliminated by a change from material to spiritual ways of thinking.

V.IX. SACRAMENTAL AND SACERDOTAL ASPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY

Religious beliefs and values usually find expression in symbols, set procedures and institutions as indicated in para II.I above. The form of such symbols, procedures, and institutions varies widely, however, and once again, the model provided by Christian churches—a model so easily adopted in a Christian society—is an inadequate guide to other faiths. Christianity itself presents a wide variety of forms of expression. These are more than mere incidental random differences dictated by aesthetics or simple convenience. The differences are often themselves matters of profound conviction, penetrating the core of religious faith. The major religious traditions of the world manifest widely divergent orientations, from sacerdotalism, commitment to sacrifice and sacramentalism, profuse sensual auxiliaries to faith (such as incense, dance, and imagery) to asceticism and singular dependence on verbal expression and prayer. Both extremes may be encountered within Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, while, in its orthodox expression, Islam is more uniformly ascetic—its ecstatic manifestations occurring at the fringes.

It may suffice to illustrate the prevailing diversity from within the Christian tradition. The Roman Church in its traditional development represents the elaborate use of auditory, visual and olfactory sensation in the service of the faith. Catholic liturgy—whilst abjuring the use of dance and drugs, which have been employed in other traditions—has elaborate ritual, vestments and sacraments in a profusion of ceremonies, marking the calendar and hierarchy of the Church, and the rites of passage of individuals. In sharp contrast to Roman Catholicism stands Quakerism, in which the concept of priesthood, the enactment of ritual (even of the unsacramental commemorative patterns of ritual common in Protestant churches), and the use of imagery or vestments are rejected. The emphasis on the adequacy of lay performances, the rejection of sacrality, whether of buildings, places, seasons or ceremonies, and of such aids to faith as rosaries and talismans, is a characteristic in greater or lesser measure of much Protestant religion. Evangelicals (of various denominations) reject the idea of a priesthood, and Quakers, Brethren, Christadelphians and Christian Scientists reject even a paid ministry. Baptists retain baptism, and most other denominations retain a breaking of bread ceremony but often only as commemorative acts of obedience to scripture, not as performances with any intrinsic merit.

Protestant religion has laid much greater stress on the written word of scripture than has the Catholic faith, even at times almost at the cost of turning the Bible itself into a fetish. Customs and practices persist in all religions, but these are sometimes minimal as in the Quaker emphasis on setting only a time and place for meeting and in the Christadelphian

attempt to avoid all offices and statuses in a community in which all are supposed to be equally committed to God's service.

VI. SCIENTOLOGY BRIEFLY DELINEATED

VI.I. THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY AS A NEW RELIGION

The Church of Scientology is one of a number of new religious movements which embraces features which correspond in certain respects to some of the trends evident in the mainstream of Western religion (as noted above in Paras. V.I.–V.IV.). It employs language which is contemporary, colloquial, and unmythical; and it presents its dogmas as matters of objective fact. Its conception of salvation has both a proximate and an ultimate dimension. The wide appeal which it has commanded among the public of the advanced countries of the Western world has made it a focus of attention among sociologists and other students of contemporary religion.

VI.II. MY KNOWLEDGE OF SCIENTOLOGY

I began to read the literature produced by the Church of Scientology in 1968, and at one time even projected a study of the movement. Although I did not finally undertake that work, I continued to read Scientology literature. I have visited the Church's headquarters at Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead, and became acquainted with Scientologists. Since that time I have maintained contact with the movement in Britain, and have paid other visits to Saint Hill Manor and to a Scientology church in London. I have continued to take a close interest in the development of the religion as one among a number of contemporary religions which are objects of interest to me as a sociologist. I have read, among other material of a more ephemeral nature, the following works, all of them official publications, and most of them the writings of L. Ron Hubbard:

Handbook for Preclears

Scientology 8-80

Scientology 8-8008

Introducing the E-Meter

Dianetics: The Original Thesis

Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health

A Test of Whole Track Recall

The Problems of Work
Self Analysis
The Creation of Human Ability
The Phoenix Lectures
The Axioms of Scientology
Advanced Procedure and Axioms
Scientology: A New Slant on Life
The Character of Scientology
Ceremonies of the Founding Church of Scientology
The Scientology Religion
Science of Survival
Introduction to Scientology Ethics
The Way to Happiness
Description of the Scientology Religion
What Is Scientology?
The Scientology Handbook

In works that I have written on new religions, I have referred to Scientology on various occasions, and included a short account of this religion in my book, *Religious Sects* (London: Weidenfeld, 1970), and a longer discussion of the religious character of Scientology in my later book, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). I have maintained my interest in the movement for the past twenty-six years.

VI.III. DIANETICS—THE GENESIS OF SCIENTOLOGY

When, in May 1950, Mr. L. Ron Hubbard first set out the prospectus of Dianetics, from which Scientology later developed, there was no suggestion that he was putting forward a pattern of religious belief and practice. Dianetics, an abreaction therapy, was not set forth in the language of faith. There is no reason to suppose that, at that time, Hubbard envisaged that Dianetics would become a system of religious belief and practice, or that his following would come to describe and organize itself as a church.

VI.IV. MENTAL HEALING AND RELIGION

Therapeutic practice, however, has often manifested a potential for acquiring metaphysical and religious affiliations, as, in different ways, may be seen from Christian Science, the New Thought movement, and yoga techniques. On the other side, established religions have at

times developed specialist activities concerned with healing, particularly mental healing, and major churches sometimes have departments organized for this purpose. Dianetics invoked no religious principles at the outset, but as the theoretical legitimation for practice became elaborated, a metaphysical dimension was increasingly recognized and some of the ideas propounded came to be described in terms that were distinctly religious in their implication.

VI.V. HOW RELIGIONS EVOLVE

All religions are a product of evolution. No religion has come into being as a fully-fledged system of belief and practice at a given moment of time. In this, Scientology is no exception: from a body of therapeutic theory a religion developed. It would be quite impossible to say when Christianity itself became a religion, beginning, as it did, with a loose collection of ethical exhortations and occasional miracles; becoming a popular movement among Galileans; gradually becoming a Jewish sect; and then becoming a distinct religion. Even then, it took centuries for its doctrines to be fully articulated, and its ritual practice has continued to undergo frequent change. In movements of more recent times, the process of evolution into a religion is yet more clearly evident. The Seventh-day Adventist church traces its origins to the widely diffused belief in the very early advent of Jesus Christ which occurred among Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and others in upstate New York in the 1830s: the Church was formed only in 1860. Similarly, it took several decades after the first experience (of the Fox Sisters) of the “rappings” at Hydesville (purportedly messages from the “spirit world”) before a Spiritualist church was formed. Similarly, Mary Baker Eddy had experimented for years with systems of mental healing before her “discovery” of her mind cure in 1866, and even for some years after that date she thought her system would be taken into the major churches rather than becoming the basis for the Church of Christ, Scientist, which she founded in 1875. The Pentecostals experienced the charismata of speech in unknown tongues, prophesying, healings and other “gifts” from the year 1900, but separate Pentecostal churches formed only very slowly in the course of the next two decades. None of these movements, all of which became separate religions, started as such. Neither did Scientology.

VI.VI. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE METAPHYSIC

It is necessary, even at the cost of some possible repetition in what follows, to set out in broad terms a comprehensive statement of the major teachings of Scientology, and to indicate the extent to which these tenets of belief constitute a coherent religious system. Scientology grew out of a more narrowly focused therapeutic system, Dianetics. It has been suggested that this

term was a combination of *dia* = through, and *nous* = mind or soul, and thus constituted, even if initially less than wholly consciously, a religious perspective. With the incorporation of Dianetics into the wider framework of Scientology, a much more extensive conception of an encompassing metaphysical system was articulated which made evident the fundamentally religious nature of this philosophy. Whilst the immediate application of Dianetics was—like that of Christ’s teachings during his lifetime—in the sphere of mental healing, the purport of the subsequent teachings, which explained and promoted that therapeutic activity, implicated a growing apprehension of spiritual ideas and values.

VI.VII. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—THE THETAN AND THE REACTIVE MIND

The basic postulate of Scientology is that man is, in fact, a spiritual entity, a *thetan* which successively occupies material human bodies. The thetan is an individual expression of *theta*, by which is understood life or the life source. Loosely defined, the thetan is the soul, but it is also the real person, the continuing and persisting identity which transcends the body which it inhabits. It is said to be immaterial and immortal, or at least to have the capacity to be immortal, and to have an infinite creative potential. It is not part of the physical universe—but it has the latent capacity to control that universe, which is comprised of Matter, Energy, Space and Time (MEST). Thetans are seen as having brought into being the material world largely for their own pleasure (as indeed might also be said of the creation of the world by the Christian God). It is held that, at sometime long past, thetans became victims of their own involvement with MEST, becoming entrapped by it and allowing their own creation to limit their own abilities and to circumscribe their sphere of operations. Thus, man’s activities and achievements in the present material world fall far short of his potential: he is encumbered by innumerable past entanglements with MEST and these are recorded in a reactive mind which responds irrationally and emotionally to anything which recalls painful and traumatic past experiences (which he has suffered or caused to others). The reactive mind functions in defiance of that capacity for control which, were he able to recapture his true native spiritual abilities, he would be able to exercise over his body and his environment. Whilst man is regarded as fundamentally good, and both desirous and capable of survival, his past forfeiture of his abilities has rendered him an endangered species.

VI.VIII. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—REINCARNATION AND KARMA

Thetans are believed to have occupied innumerable bodies over aeons of time. Thus, Scientology embraces a theory which, whilst differing in particulars, shares major assumptions with that

theory of reincarnation as maintained in Hinduism and Buddhism. The Scientological emphasis on the importance of present (or future) consequence of past actions resembles the concept of karma. Untoward effects result from “overt acts” (harmful acts) which are an aspect of the entanglement with the material universe. The ideal for the thetan is to maintain rational action and to be “at cause” over phenomena: that is to say, to determine the course of events in the immediate environment. This idea has clear analogies with the Eastern concept of creating good karma for the future by wholesome deeds, although Scientologists do not use these terms or concepts. The events of past lives affect the present, but, by the techniques developed in Scientology, these events can be recalled, confronted, and the specific sources of present problems can be located in those events. It is this facility which provides the basis for spiritual healing—that is, it provides the opportunity for altering the “karmatic” effects of past actions.

VI.IX. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—THE EIGHT DYNAMICS

Existence, according to Scientology, may be recognized in eight different divisions in an ascending order of magnitude, each being designated as a dynamic. Briefly described these are: 1st, the self dynamic, the urge of the self for existence; 2nd, the sex dynamic, which incorporates both the sexual act and the family unit and the maintenance of the family; 3rd, the will to existence, which is found in a group or an association, such as the school, the town, or the nation; 4th, the dynamic will of mankind to maintain its existence; 5th, the existence and will to survive of the entire animal kingdom, which includes all living entities; 6th, the urge towards existence of the entire physical universe of matter, energy, space and time; 7th, “the urge towards existence as or of spirits,” which includes all spiritual phenomena, with or without identity; and finally, the 8th dynamic: the urge towards existence as infinity. This dynamic is identified as the Supreme Being, which also can be called the “God dynamic.” Scientology is concerned with survival, and the survival of each of these dynamics is seen as part of the goal of the practice of Scientology. Thus, although much of the initial practice of Scientology is concerned more narrowly with more personal spiritual benefits for those (preclears) who seek Scientological assistance, ultimately the Scientologist must realize that his present life is but a fragment of his continuing existence as a thetan, and that the life of the individual is linked to each of these ascending levels described in the eight dynamics, and so ultimately to the existence and survival of the Supreme Being or infinity.

VI.X. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—THERAPY AND COMMUNICATION

As in other religions, the primary and initial preoccupation of many of those who are drawn to Scientology is proximate salvation from immediate suffering and travail; this is the appeal

of the therapeutic element which is found in many religions—and conspicuously so in early Christianity—alongside the more mystical, metaphysical, spiritual teachings which believers are expected to come to as they grow in the faith (see Hebrews, 5:12–14). Most Scientologists have first learned of the possibility of improving their everyday experience and of enhancing their intelligence (by gaining increasing control of the reactive mind). The possibility of achieving such results, through the process of auditing, is represented in the formulation known as A-R-C. A stands for Affinity, which represents the emotional experience of the individual and his sense of relationship to others through the emotions. R stands for Reality, which is represented as inter-subjective consensus about objective phenomena. C stands for Communication, and great importance is attached in Scientology to communication. When people have an affinity, when they agree about the nature of objective phenomena, then communication can occur very readily. Associated with this triadic concept of A-R-C, is the scale of human emotions, known to Scientologists as the “tone scale.” As emotional tone descends, so communication becomes difficult, and reality becomes badly experienced. Communication itself is, however, an agency which seeks to increase understanding and, effectively and precisely used, it becomes the main therapeutic agency for releasing the individual from the entrapment he has experienced with the material world. The thetan can be enabled to communicate with its own past, recognize the nature of past traumatic experiences, and attain self-knowledge which permits him to escape from these encumbrances.

VI.XI. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—AUDITING AS AN AGENCY OF THERAPY

The Tone Scale is the first representation to the individual of the possibility of benefit from Scientology, indicating an ascent from chronic emotional tone, such as apathy, grief, and fear, to enthusiasm (and, at more advanced levels, to exhilaration and serenity). It is to experience benefits of this kind that many are first drawn to Scientology. The technique for such progress is found in auditing, in which a trained Scientologist, by the use of carefully controlled questions, brings back to the awareness of the individual episodes from his own past which have left a traumatic imprint (an “engram”) in his reactive mind and which prevent the individual from behaving rationally. Release from the effects of these impediments to rational thinking is thus the process by which an individual is raised on the “tone scale”, so improving his competencies, but it is also—and herein lies its fuller religious significance—the method by which the thetan might achieve salvation, initially by eliminating the aberrations that it suffers as a consequence of entanglement with the material world, and eventually by gaining total freedom from the ill effects of the MEST universe. Scientologists refer to this condition as being “at cause.” It has clear analogues with the mode of salvation that is offered in Eastern religions. Since they,

too, see the individual as encumbered by the effects of past deeds (karma), the conception of salvation which they espouse is also through a process (enlightenment) by which the effect of karma can be broken, liberating the individual. The ultimate goal is for the individual, known as an Operating Thetan, to exist outside the body, to be in a condition described as “exterior” to all physicality. Such a condition is one which at least some Christians would acknowledge as the condition of the saved soul.

VI.XII. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—RATIONAL MEANS FOR SALVATION

The religious philosophy outlined above lies behind the practice of Scientology. Hubbard has himself regarded it as in some ways similar to the philosophy of Eastern religions. In particular, he has cited the Vedas, the hymns of creation which form part of the Hindu tradition, as containing a concept very similar to Scientology’s “Cycle of Action.” The Cycle of Action is the apparent order of life from birth, through growth, to decay and death, but through the knowledge which Scientology makes available, the baleful effects of the operation of this cycle might be avoided. The cycle can be amended from one of creation, survival and destruction, to one in which all elements can be creative acts: Scientology is committed to promoting and increasing creativity and conquering chaos and negativity. It recognizes a continuing “track” or line of descent of wisdom from the Vedas and Gautama Buddha to the Christian message, and claims some affinity with the teachings of all of these. But whereas the wisdom presented, for example in Buddhism, perhaps allowed occasional individuals to attain salvation in one lifetime, there was, then, no set of precise practices which ensured that result; there was little possibility of replication. The attainment of salvation remained subject to random or uncontrolled factors. Salvation was attained by a few, here and there, now and then, if at all. What Hubbard claimed to do was to standardize, almost to routinize, religious practice, and to increase the predictability of soteriological results. Such application of technical methods to spiritual goals indicates the extent to which Scientology adopts modern techniques for the realisation of goals that were once reached only spasmodically and occasionally, if at all. This, then, is the attempt to introduce certainty and order into spiritual exercises and attainments. Scientology seeks to discipline and order the religious quest by the employment of rational procedures. In this sense, it has done in the technological age much of what Methodism sought to do at an earlier stage of social development, by trying to persuade people that the goal of salvation was to be sought in a controlled, disciplined, methodical way. Whilst the actual methods of the Methodists were still couched in the relatively conventional language of current Christianity, the methods advocated by Scientology bear the strong imprint of a society more fully committed to rational and technological procedures. The means which Scientology employs have been likened to the *upaya* (“right method”) of the seventh stage

of the Bodhisattva Way to salvation in Mahayana Buddhism. According to this version of Buddhism, at the seventh stage, the believer becomes a transcendental Bodhisattva who (like the Operating Thetan in Scientology) is no longer tied to a physical body.

VI.XIII. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—AUDITING AS PASTORAL COUNSEL

The means which Scientology employs constitutes a form of pastoral counselling, most specifically organized into the techniques of *auditing* (from Latin *audire*, to listen). The specific techniques and apparatus of auditing are organized as a technology which constitutes the core part of Scientological religious practice. This pattern of practice is essential for all who would experience the saving benefits of the faith, and Hubbard's effort has been to reduce the process of spiritual enlightenment to a set of ordered procedures which systematically reach deeper levels of consciousness. This method, like that of affirmation in Christian Science, is claimed to eliminate both the sense of sin and the effects of past suffering and wrongdoing.

VI.XIV. SCIENTOLOGY DOCTRINE—STAGES OF SALVATION

The two principal stages in this healing and soteriological process are the conditions described respectively as Clear and Operating Thetan. The preclear who first encounters Scientology is troubled by the mental impedimenta of past painful and emotional experiences. Auditing seeks to bring these items to consciousness, to make the individual communicate with his past, to confront those events which have given rise to emotional discharge, and thereby to bring the individual to a point at which he transcends that discharge and can review these hitherto forgotten disturbances with total equanimity and rational awareness. The baleful effects of such items are thereby dissipated. Mental blocks, feelings of guilt and inadequacy, fixation with past traumas or incidental occasions of emotional upset are overcome. The individual is brought up "to present time," that is, he is freed from the disabling effects of events that have occurred on the "time track" of the thetan's earlier present life or past lives. By improving communication, auditing brings the thetan into a condition where past hindrances have been eliminated. He is defined as a Clear, a being who no longer has his own reactive mind, who is self-determined, at least with respect to his own being. The Operating Thetan is at a higher level of the same process, since he has also acquired control over his environment. He is no longer dependent on the body which, for the time being, he occupies: he is said, indeed, to be no longer in a body. In other words, it might be said that the Operating Thetan is a being who has realized his full spiritual potential, who has achieved salvation. The current work, *What Is Scientology?* (p. 222) affirms "at the level of Operating Thetan one deals with

the individual's own immortality as a spiritual being. One deals with the thetan himself in relation to eternity...there are states higher than that of mortal man.”

VI.XV. RELIGIOUS ROLES IN SCIENTOLOGY—THE AUDITOR

Religious ministrations are available in Scientology through four related agents, whose roles both complement each other and to some extent overlap. These functionaries are the auditor, the case supervisor, the course supervisor, and the chaplain. The auditor's role is fundamental: auditing is the vital technique for the acquisition ultimately of that form of enlightenment by which the individual is saved. The auditor is trained in skills with which he helps others, and helps them to help themselves. “All Scientology auditors are required to become ordained ministers” [*What Is Scientology?* p. 557] and every auditor has taken training courses which fit him for ministry, even though he might not actually take up that role. The auditor learns to deal with the preclear who seeks his help as neutrally and clinically as possible. Unlike the confessor in the Roman Catholic Church, the auditor does not proceed according to his own spiritual apprehensions and on his own personal assessment of the preclear's needs; rather, he follows in detail the prescribed procedures. The whole thrust of Scientology is towards the elimination of incidental, adventitious, and idiosyncratic elements from its therapeutic and spiritual ministrations. Every effort is made to ensure that auditor emotion does not disturb the standardized procedures and techniques of auditing. Pastoral counselling is thus seen, particularly in the auditing situation *per se*, as a much more exact technique than it has generally been considered in conventional churches, and much greater and more precise attention is paid to it. For Scientologists, pastoral counselling is not the purveyance of random advice given at the personal discretion or variable competence of one individual to another, but a systematic and controlled endeavour to promote self-enlightenment and spiritual knowledge.

VI.XVI. RELIGIOUS ROLES IN SCIENTOLOGY—THE CASE SUPERVISOR

Responsibility for the correct application of auditing procedures lies with the case supervisor. One of the case supervisor's most important functions is to review carefully the notes the auditor has taken of the auditing session in question. These notes are highly technical, incomprehensible except to a trained auditor—and consist of notations concerning the auditing procedures applied, the responses indicated by the E-Meter and how the preclear fared. The notes must be sufficiently complete to show that the preclear's spiritual progress is in accordance with the soteriology of Scientology. The case supervisor is able to understand these technical notes since he himself is a highly trained auditor who has undergone additional specialised training as a case supervisor. He checks that the auditing has conformed to prescribed standards, the techniques

have been correctly applied, and that the preclear is making appropriate progress. Should any error have occurred in auditing the case supervisor detects and corrects it. He may require an erring auditor to re-study the misapplied materials and practise the correct procedure to ensure that errors are not repeated. After each session he specifies the next stage of auditing. Since people differ, each case is reviewed individually to determine the appropriate processes to be applied and to ensure that the preclear is making due spiritual progress. The case supervisor's role thus ensures that Scientology auditing is properly conducted and controlled.

VI.XVII. RELIGIOUS ROLES IN SCIENTOLOGY—THE COURSE SUPERVISOR

The course supervisor is even more fundamental to the practice of Scientology than the auditor. It is the course supervisor who trains auditors to the exacting standards set forth by Hubbard. The course supervisor is an expert in the techniques of study developed by Hubbard. He is trained to identify any obstacles to understanding and to resolve any difficulties that the student of Scientological literature might encounter. The course supervisor ensures that a Scientology student grasps Scientology theory and by practising drills and exercises, masters its application. Unlike other classroom supervisors, the course supervisor does not lecture, nor does he in any way offer his own interpretation of the subject. This point is important because Scientologists believe that the results obtained in Scientology come only from closely following Scientology scripture exactly as written by Hubbard. Verbal expositions passed on from teacher to student would, no matter how unintentional, inevitably involve alteration of the original material. Thus, the course supervisor is necessarily an expert in recognising the situation when a student encounters a problem, and in directing him to the place where, by his own endeavours, he can find its resolution.

VI.XVIII. RELIGIOUS ROLES IN SCIENTOLOGY—THE CHAPLAIN

Scientology churches and missions each have a chaplain. He is a trained auditor, and the ministerial course is an essential part of his training. That course presents Scientology as a religion, as an agency by which men may attain salvation. It includes an introduction to the teachings of the world's great religions; training in conducting services and ceremonies; study of the Creed and codes of Scientology; and instruction in ethics and auditing technology. Perhaps the major aspect of the chaplain's role is that of pastoral counselling, not in the general sense in which such counselling is provided in the course of auditing, but rather in the more diffuse sense, in listening to problems and difficulties encountered by Scientologists in mastering the teachings and techniques of the faith. Chaplains seek to smooth organizational

operations, and, if called upon, seek to interpret moral and even family matters in accordance with Scientological principles. In their functioning within a particular Scientology organisation, they act much as does a bishop's chaplain in the established church. The chaplain serves as celebrant in the rites of passage performed in the Church (naming, wedding and funeral rites). In weekly services (held, for general convenience, on Sundays), the chaplain orders the service, about which he exercises some general discretion. Within the service, he also fulfils a preaching role, much like that of a Nonconformist minister, and here his function is as an expositor (rather than as an orator). His discourse is always closely concerned with the teachings and application of the principles of the faith.

VI.XIX. TECHNICAL MEANS TO SPIRITUAL GOALS—A RELIGION NOT A SCIENCE

To understand the operation of Scientology and of its religious professionals, it is necessary to recognise that Scientology conjoins technical means to spiritual goals. Its emphasis on technique, its use of technical language, and its insistence on systematic procedure and detailed order should not obscure the spiritual and soteriological nature of its ultimate concerns. Scientology is a religion that emerged in a period dominated by science; its methods bear the imprint of the age in which it came into being. Part of its fundamental commitment is to the idea that man needs to think rationally, and to control his own powerful but disturbing emotions. Only in this way will man attain the complete free-will and self-determination which Scientologists believe is his right and his necessity. To attain salvation, the individual must make a consistent and stable application of well-articulated formulae. Like Christian Science, Scientology seeks to deal in certainties. Scientology's ultimate goals would seem to transcend empirical proof, and the beliefs of its followers are transcendental, metaphysical, and spiritual even though the religion emphasizes personal experience as the route to personal conviction or certainty. The scientific style of Scientological discourse does not derogate from its religious status and concerns.

VII. A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

VII.I. THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTOLOGICAL IDEAS—PAST LIVES

From mid-1950, Hubbard had already perceived that past lives might be of importance in explaining man's problems. The foundation that he set up in Elizabeth, New Jersey, was devoting

itself at that time to a study of possible benefits of “recalling” “the circumstances of deaths in previous incarnations” [Joseph A. Winter, *A Doctor’s Report on Dianetics: Theory and Therapy*, New York: 1951, p. 189]. This interest developed into a positive commitment to the view that deleterious experiences in past lives (as well as in early life) created “engrams” (impressions or mental image pictures which form the reactive mind, which are associated with pain and unconsciousness, and which cause illnesses, inhibitions and hence irrational behaviour). Dianetics and Scientology had thus to be extended to eliminate these engrams as well as those created by early experiences in the individual’s present life.

VII.II. THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTOLOGICAL IDEAS—FROM DIANETICS TO SCIENTOLOGY

This disruption of mental life was expressed, at another level, as theta, the universe of thought, having become “enturbulated” by MEST. Auditing was intended to free theta from this encumbrance. The concept of theta also underwent refinement in 1951, being recognized as “life force, élan vital, the spirit, the soul” [in *Science of Survival*, I, p. 4]. At this point, Hubbard’s belief system maybe said to have become a system for the cure of souls. This development became more explicit when, in 1952, Hubbard launched Scientology, and this new, expanded, and more encompassing belief-system subsumed Dianetics, providing it with a more fully articulated metaphysical rationale. *Theta* now became the *thetan*, a more explicit analogue of the soul, and the religious dimension of the system now became explicit. The thetan was perceived as the essential identity of the individual, the person himself (that which is aware of being aware) and the Scientological theory now provided the metaphysical justification for the soteriological task of freeing the thetan from the ill-effects of previous lives (previous occupations of human bodies).

VII.III. THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTOLOGICAL IDEAS—THETAN AND BODY

The individual cannot talk about “my thetan” since in essence the individual *is* the thetan occupying a body; in this sense, the thetan is seen as even more important than the soul in conventional Christian interpretation. The thetan enters a body (at, after, or even before birth) seeking identity. In this sense, Scientology has some similarity to the concepts embraced in the Buddhist theory of reincarnation. Hubbard is, however, more definite and precise in his characterisation of the reallocation of thetans to bodies than anything found in Buddhist scriptures.

VII.IV. PROXIMATE AND ULTIMATE SALVATION

The initial goal of Scientology auditing is to release the thetan from the confines of the reactive mind: the ultimate goal is to rehabilitate the thetan so that he achieves a stable state where he no longer has a reactive mind. He moves from preoccupation with the proximate and immediate goal of his own survival (the 1st dynamic) to an increasingly expanded recognition of the possibilities of salvation, as he identifies progressively with the family, associations, mankind, the animal world, the universe, spiritual states, and infinity or God. Thus, the ultimate goal of the thetan working through the eight dynamics is the attainment of something of a god-like condition which Scientologists refer to as “Full OT” or “Native State.”

VII.V. THE SOTERIOLOGY OF SCIENTOLOGY

This scheme is in itself a soteriology, a doctrine of salvation. If the final condition appears to exceed the salvation normally posited in Christian religion, that is because soteriologists often deal with proximate rather than with ultimate salvation. Christianity, too, has concepts of man as joint-heir with Christ, although the more limited prospect of the soul finally reaching heaven has frequently satisfied both the Church and the laity. Even so, in some movements—Mormonism is one example—the idea of man attaining the status of god is explicitly acknowledged. The terms in which salvation is to be accomplished differ in Scientology, but the long-term idea of saving the soul is easily recognized in its teachings. In its practice, the proximate ends of salvaging the individual’s sanity, curing his psychic distress, and helping him to overcome depression are emphasised, but they are justified by reference to the soteriology outlined above.

VII.VI. SIMILARITIES TO BUDDHISM AND THE SANKHYA SCHOOL

The mechanics of life as characterised by Scientology have considerable similarity to those embraced by both Buddhism and the Sankhya school of Hinduism. The accumulation of a reactive bank in the mind bears some similarity to the idea of karma. The concept of past lives has much in common with the theories of reincarnation in Eastern religions. The idea of acquiring access to levels of consciousness is found in Yoga (the Yoga school is closely related to that of Sankhya) and the yogin is believed to be able to attain supernatural power.

VII.VII. SALVATION AS A GLOBAL AND AS AN INDIVIDUAL POSSIBILITY

The ultimate prospect of salvation for the thetan embraces the idea of survival for mankind and the animal and material universes, through the agency of Scientology. This element of concern for society and the cosmos certainly exists in Scientology. The idea of “clearing the planet” (producing “Clears”—people who have become entirely clear of the reactive mind) has been put forward as a goal. Hubbard has, however, at times, shifted the emphasis and wrote, “Scientology is interested not in ‘saving the world’ but in making able *individuals* more able by exact standard technological address to the individual himself, which is the spirit.” [*The Character of Scientology*, 1968, p. 5.] However, what may be being emphasised here is that world salvation is itself contingent on the salvation of individual thetans—a typical evangelical emphasis.

VII.VIII. MORALITY IN SCIENTOLOGY

It is sometimes suggested that it is a characteristic of religion to prescribe a moral code, though religions vary considerably in the extent to which they are committed to a specific code of morality. Scientology began with the general goals of enhancing the individual’s potential. In its emphasis on freedom, it adopted a more permissive approach to morality than that expressed by traditional Christian churches. However, from the very early exposition of Dianetics, Hubbard made clear that the individual was responsible for his own limitations, that a thetan was basically good and would diminish his own power were he to commit further harmful acts. The emphasis of auditing is also to demand that the individual should confront problems and take responsibility for his own well-being. He must acknowledge the “overt acts” (harmful acts) that he has committed in both his present and his past lives.

In an important publication, *Introduction to Scientology Ethics*, L. Ron Hubbard set out the ethical standards required of a Scientologist, and made it clear that a commitment to ethics was fundamental to the faith. The individual’s goal is survival—that is, survival on all eight dynamics, from concern for the self and the family up to concern for the urge towards existence as infinity, the so-called God dynamic [see para VI.IX]. Survival, as a Scientological concept, conforms to the general concern of all religion—salvation. Ethical action is deemed to be rational behaviour conducive to that end. Thus Hubbard laid stress on the individual’s need to apply ethical standards to his conduct and to behave rationally if he was to achieve his own salvation and facilitate that of all mankind. Thus, in ways analogous to the Buddhist’s

self-interested commitment to good actions as a way of improving his future karma, so the Scientologist is enjoined to behave rationally—that is, ethically—towards the attainment of survival, for himself and for the widening constituencies embraced by the eight dynamics. Hubbard wrote, “Ethics are the actions an individual takes on himself in order to accomplish optimum survival for himself and others on all dynamics. Ethical actions are survival actions. Without a use of ethics we will not survive” [p. 19]. Survival is not mere survival. It is rather survival in a felicitous condition. “Survival is measured in pleasure” [p. 31]. Thus, as in Christianity, salvation entails a state of happiness. But “a clean heart and clean hands are the only way to achieve happiness and survival” [p. 28]; thus, in practice, achieving survival demands the maintenance of moral standards. Hubbard wrote “As for ideals, as for honesty, as for one’s love of one’s fellow man, one cannot find good survival for one or for many where these things are absent” [p. 24]. Scientology ethics subsumes moral codes, but goes further in affirming the essential rationality of Scientological ethics, the application of which is seen as the only way in which the deteriorating condition of contemporary morality and the activities of anti-social personalities can be redressed and mankind redeemed.

In 1981, Hubbard formulated a set of moral precepts, said to be based on common sense. He described the booklet in which they were presented as “an individual work... not part of any religious doctrine” and intended they be widely disseminated as a solution to the declining moral standards of modern society; however, Scientologists adopted this moral code as part of the religion. This code echoes in considerable measure both the Decalogue and other precepts of Christian morality, expressed in modern language and with the addition of social, functional, and pragmatic justification for many of the principles that are put forward. The code interdicts murder; theft; untruthfulness; all illegal acts; the infliction of harm on people of goodwill; and it enjoins, *inter alia*, faithfulness to sexual partners; respect for parents; assistance to children; temperateness; support for just government; fulfilment of obligations; respect for the religious beliefs of others; care for health and for the environment; industry; and competence. It contains, in both negative and positive terms, a version of the golden rule that is frequently rendered in Christian traditions as: “Do not unto others that which you would not that others should do unto you.” The booklet urges its readers to present copies to all others for whose happiness and survival the reader is concerned.

VII.IX. THE RELIGIOUS CLAIMS OF SCIENTOLOGY

Despite the various elements described above which pertain to religion, Scientology was not initially claimed as religion. Even when, in 1954, three churches were incorporated for

Scientology (with somewhat different titles), the religious implications of Scientology were still not fully explored. However, Hubbard affirmed that Scientology had religious aims. He wrote “Scientology has accomplished the goal of religion expressed in all Man’s written history: the freeing of the soul by wisdom. It is a far more intellectual religion than that known to the West as late as 1950. If we, without therapy, simply taught our truths, we would bring civilization to a barbaric West” [*Creation of Human Ability*, p. 417]. Certainly, Hubbard regarded Christianity as in some respects less advanced than Buddhism, referring to the Christian day of judgment as “...a barbaric interpretation of what Gautama Buddha was talking about, the emancipation of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths” [*Phoenix Lectures*, 1968, pp. 29–30]. Scientology itself was a religion “in the oldest and fullest sense” [*ibid*, p. 35]. In *The Character of Scientology*, 1968, Hubbard reiterated some of these earlier points, and claimed that the background of Scientology included the Vedas, the Tao, Buddha, the Hebrews and Jesus, as well as a number of philosophers. Scientology had “brought the first religious technology to overcome the overwhelming backlog of spiritual neglect” [p. 10], and this he saw as combining the honesty and precision of the Gautama Buddha with the urgent productive practicality of Henry Ford [p. 12]. He saw the auditor as someone trained in auditing technology, and Scientological training as religious education.

VII.X. L. RON HUBBARD AS RELIGIOUS LEADER

The claim is often made (by their followers if not by themselves) that the founders of religious movements are special agents of revelation through whom a supreme being expresses himself. This prophetic mode of religious leadership is characteristic of movements in the general Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, but in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, the religious leader is more typically seen as a master who benefits his followers by indicating to them the path to enlightenment which he has himself trodden. Hubbard conforms much more fully to this latter model. He is represented as a teacher who, rather than having had religious truths revealed to him, is said to have discovered by scientific research facts which indicate certain therapeutic practices and a metaphysical body of knowledge which explains man’s higher being and ultimate destiny. Contemporary Scientological works build up an image of Hubbard, who is readily described as a genius, very much in the style of eulogistic biographies produced to enhance the reputation and acclaim the unique experience of prophets, gurus, and founders of religious movements [for example, *What Is Scientology?* pp. 83–137]. In the Christian tradition, religious leaders whose roles and acclaimed reputations have most closely approximated that of Hubbard in Scientology are Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, and the leaders of the various New Thought movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

VII.XI. RELIGION AND CHURCH ORGANIZATION

It is not by any means necessary for a religion or a religious system to organize as a church. The spiritual elements within the Scientological scheme were in evidence before the movement registered church organizations, and these elements, taken together, certainly justify the designation of the belief system of Scientology as a religion. But even if the organisation as a church were the criterion of a religion, Scientology meets this test. The Church was incorporated and a creed was promulgated in the 1950s, and the form of certain ceremonies was prescribed. The Creed and the ceremonies formalised institutionally the commitments implicit in the belief system of Scientology. The ecclesiastical structure of Scientology is hierarchical, reflecting the graduated system of learning and spiritual enlightenment required to master its teachings. Lower-order organisations are conducted as missions conceived as evangelistic agencies. The lower-echelon churches undertake what may be designated as elementary training of ministers leading towards ordination, and serve local congregations of “parish” members. This tier of church organisation constitutes the core of the system. Above this level there are higher church organisational echelons engaged in advanced auditor training and auditing. The higher level organisations provide guidance for lower-level institutions. Analogous to this structure, the Church has developed a volunteer ministry of lay people who undergo training for social and community work. The ministry itself is hierarchically organised, each grade being marked by the completion of certificated training courses. At the lower levels of qualification, the volunteer ministers undertake, *inter alia*, prison and hospital visiting, while higher level ministers seek, where numbers warrant it, to bring into being congregations of Scientologists. The formal overall ecclesiastical structure bears some resemblance to that of Christian denominations, different as teaching and practices may be. The volunteer ministry has some loose parallels with the lay diaconate of the Anglican and other churches.

VII.XII. THE CREED OF SCIENTOLOGY

In a work, *Ceremonies of the Founding Church of Scientology*, 1966, it was explained that “in a Scientology church service we do not use prayers, attitudes of piety, or threats of damnation. We use the facts, the truths, the understandings that have been discovered in the science of Scientology” [p. 7]. The Creed of the Church of Scientology devotes much attention to human rights. It affirms the belief that men were created equal, and have rights to their own religious practices and performances; to their own lives, sanity, defense and to “conceive, choose, assist or support their own organizations, churches and governments,” and “to think freely, to talk freely, to write freely their own opinions...” It also affirms the belief that “the study of the mind and the healing of mentally caused ills should not be alienated from religion or condoned

in nonreligious fields.” It is maintained “that Man is basically good; that he is seeking to survive; that his survival depends upon himself and upon his fellows and his attainment of brotherhood with the universe.” It is also affirmed that “...we of the Church believe that the laws of God forbid Man to destroy his own kind; to destroy the sanity of another; to destroy or enslave another’s soul; to destroy or reduce the survival of one’s companions or one’s group. And we of the Church believe that the spirit can be saved and that the spirit alone may save or heal the body.”

VII.XIII. SCIENTOLOGY CEREMONIES

The wedding and funeral ceremonies prescribed for the Church, whilst somewhat unconventional, do not depart radically from the general practice of Western society. The christening ceremony, referred to as a “naming ceremony” is more explicitly committed to the principles of the Scientological belief-system. Its purpose is to assist the thetan who has recently come to acquire this particular body. At the time of his acquisition of a new body, the thetan is believed to be unaware of his identity, and this naming ceremony is a way of helping the thetan to learn the identity of his new body, of the parents of that body, and the god-parents who will assist the new being. This ceremony is, therefore, a type of orientation process, fully in accordance with Scientological metaphysics.

VIII. CONCEPTIONS OF WORSHIP AND SALVATION

VIII.I. WORSHIP—A CHANGING CONCEPT

Theistic religions—traditional Christianity among them—attach importance to worship, which constitutes formalized expression of reverence and veneration of a deity, humility, submission to that deity, prayer (communication with the deity), proclamations in his praise, and thanksgiving for his benefits. (Older conceptions of worship also involve sacrifice—animal or human—and acts of propitiation of a vengeful or jealous deity. But concepts of worship have changed, and older forms of worship, once regarded as indispensable, would now be regarded as against the law. The idea of worship is changing in our own times, both within the traditional churches and among new movements.) The traditional conception of worship is generally associated with the postulation of a deity (or deities) or a personage who is the object of worshipful attitudes and actions. This definition of worship, which accords with those employed in recent court cases in England, is narrowly based on the model of historic Judaeo-Christian-Islamic practice. As empirical evidence makes clear, however, worship in

this sense does not occur in all religions, and where it occurs it manifests significant variations, some of which are instanced below.

VIII.II. VARIATIONS IN WORSHIP—THERAVADA BUDDHISM

First: Theravada Buddhism—in its pure form—and some other religions posit not a supreme deity, but an ultimate law or principle which neither demands nor depends upon the reverence, praise, or worship of believers. It is generally accepted that a deity is not a *sine qua non* of religion, thus—if the concept is to be retained—a definition of worship broader than that prescribed in the Christian tradition must be adopted.

VIII.III. VARIATIONS IN WORSHIP—NICHIREN BUDDHISM

Second: there are religious movements, found for example in Nichiren Buddhism, which deny supreme beings but which require the worship of an object. The Soka Gakkai Buddhists, a movement which has about 15 million adherents, with about six thousand in Britain, worships the Gohonzon, a mandala on which is inscribed the vital symbols or formulae of ultimate truth. In worshipping the Gohonzon, these Buddhists expect benisons from it. Thus, something resembling the concept of worship as understood in Christian contexts may occur even when a supreme being is explicitly denied.

VIII.IV. VARIATIONS IN WORSHIP—QUAKERS

Third: even within the broad Christian tradition, attitudes of reverence and humility need not imply specific forms of behaviour such as are to be observed in Orthodox, Roman Catholic or High Church Anglican services, in which believers may bow, kneel or prostrate themselves, pronounce words of praise, thanksgiving, blessing, and seek, by supplication, blessings in return. Within Christianity there are many movements which follow different practices: The Quakers provide a cogent example. Quakers meet in a spirit of reverence, but do not engage in formal acts of worship such as set or spoken prayers, the singing of hymns or chanting of psalms. Often they conduct their entire meeting in silence.

VIII.V. VARIATIONS IN WORSHIP—CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Fourth: within Christianity, there has been a tendency both within the old-established churches and in a variety of relatively recently arisen groups for the idea of God to be expressed in increasingly abstract terms. Since some major modern theologians have redefined conceptions

of God, often eliminating the idea of God as a person (see above, para IV.III.) older conceptions of worship appear to some to be anachronistic. Opinion polls reveal that a steadily increasing proportion of those who believe in God none the less do not believe that God is a person, they aver rather that God is a force. In newly arisen religious movements, there are sometimes forms of “worship” adapted to these more modern, abstract apprehensions of deity. One example is Christian Science. Since that movement, which pre-dates Scientology by over seventy years, has many characteristics in common with Scientology, and since Christian Science has long been recognised as a religion, the attitude to worship in that movement is explored more fully. In Christian Science, God is defined as “Principle”, “Life”, “Truth”, “Love”, “Mind”, “Spirit”, “Soul.” These impersonal abstractions do not require manifestations of submission and veneration, and such dispositions are accorded only limited expression in Christian Science church services. The opinions of Mary Baker Eddy (founder of Christian Science) on worship are represented in these quotations from her textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*:

Audible prayer can never do the works of spiritual understanding... Long prayers, superstitions, and creeds, clip the strong pinions of love and clothe religion in human forms. Whatever materializes worship hinders man’s spiritual growth and keeps him from demonstrating his power over error. [pp. 4–5]

Dost thou ‘Love thy Lord God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind’? This command includes much, even the surrender of all merely material sensation, affection, and worship. [p. 9]

Jesus’ history made a new calendar, which we call the Christian era; but he established no ritualistic worship. [p. 20]

It is sad that the phrase divine service has come so generally to mean public worship instead of daily deeds. [p. 40]

We worship spiritually only as we cease to worship materially. Spiritual devoutness is the soul of Christianity. Worshipping through the medium of matter is paganism. Judaic and other rituals are the types and shadows of true worship. [p. 140]

The Israelites centered their thought on the material in their attempted worship of the spiritual. To them matter was a substance and Spirit was shadow. They thought to worship Spirit from a material standpoint, but this was impossible.

They might appeal to Jehovah but their prayer brought down no proof that it was heard because they did not sufficiently understand God to be able to demonstrate his power to heal. [p. 351]

Although Christian Scientists use the Lord's Prayer congregationally, that prayer is translated into a number of affirmations in accordance with Eddy's teachings. Silent prayer in Christian Science is affirmation of "truths," not supplication; God is a "Principle" to be demonstrated, not a "Being" to be placated or propitiated. Hence worship in Christian Science is different in form, mood and expression from worship in traditional churches.

VIII.VI. WORSHIP DEFINED BY ITS OBJECTIVES, NOT BY ITS FORMS

The foregoing comments on the variations in worship indicate the need—if all the appropriate empirical evidence is to be taken into account—for a much broader definition of worship than that which is confined to, and dependent upon, the assumptions of one specific tradition. The forms traditional in Christian churches do not exhaust all the variant modes in which worship can and does occur (even within Christian churches). A distinction must be made between the external forms of worship (which may be particular, local, regional, or national) and the aims of worship, which we may represent as universal. The aim of worship is to establish rapport between the votary and the supernatural ultimate (being, object, law, principle, dimension, "ground of being," or "concern") in whatever way that ultimate is conceived by the religious body to which the votary belongs, with a view to his ultimate attainment of salvation or enlightenment. To emphasise that the defining characteristic of worship lies in its purpose makes apparent the cultural relativity of the various forms that worship assumes. Once worship is defined by reference to its objectives, we can comprehend diverse conceptions of the ultimate, extending from idols to transcendental laws. Thus, an idol is worshipped as a despotic entity who confers favours or inflicts injuries; the worship of an anthropomorphic deity emphasizes rather a relationship, of trust, but also of dependence; worship of more sophisticated conceptions of a supreme being places less emphasis on the emotional volatility of the deity, and stresses the search for harmony of dispositions in accordance with more general ethical principles; worship of an entirely abstract ultimate verity, law, or dimension, tends to be concerned with the diffusion of knowledge, the attainment of enlightenment, and the realisation of full human potential. All of these variously specified goals may be seen as part of man's search for salvation, however differently salvation itself may be conceived. Reverence for the ultimate, for man's "ground of being", however depicted, is a general attribute of the respect and concern for life, which does not depend on any specific culture-bound behavioural forms or norms.

VIII.VII. THE DECLINE OF THE POETIC MODE OF WORSHIP

In multi-religious societies, the concept of what constitutes worship must be stated in abstract terms if the diversity of religion is to be duly acknowledged. The recent and continuing trends in religion are towards abstract and more readily universalized expression. This is true not only of major theologians and among the clergy, but is also evident among many new religious movements. In a scientific and technological age, men's conception of deity, or of the ultimate, tends to be understood in terms which are themselves more concordant with scientific and technical experience, even though this type of language and conceptualization stands in contrast with traditional poetic imagery which was once typical of religious expression. The poetic mode is steadily abandoned not only in new movements, but also in the so-called traditional churches, as may be seen by the liturgical reforms in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II, and in the replacement of the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England by more prosaic, vernacular and colloquial forms of expression. Outside these churches, in movements without the obligation to even vestigial respect for tradition, the creation of new language and new liturgical forms has enjoyed even greater freedom. Among these movements is Scientology.

VIII.VIII. COMMUNICATION AS WORSHIP

Scientology presents a thoroughly abstract conception of the Supreme Being, as the Eighth Dynamic. Scientologists seek to expand their awareness and comprehension to embrace all dimensions of being, with the objective of aiding, and being part of, the survival of the Supreme Being or Infinity. Scientologists venerate life, and recognize God as an ultimate ground of being, but this recognition does not entail specific forms of behaviour that at all closely approximate those acts that are considered to be "worship" in traditional Christian churches. Scientology is a movement which incorporates people from diverse religious backgrounds; which emphasizes new conceptions of creation, the meaning of life, and salvation; and its teachings draw on more than one of the great religious traditions as well as on broad scientific orientations. It is therefore entirely appropriate that Scientology should present its theories in abstract and universal terms, and its conception of worship accommodates these perspectives. The general position has been expressed as follows: "In Scientology, we define worship in terms of communication. Who could worship effectively would be he who considered himself capable of reaching the distance necessary to communicate with the Supreme Being" [*Scientology as a Religion*, p. 30].

The essence of Scientology is understanding through communication—communication with the thetan's own past and with the environment, and in that sense it may be likened to

the communication that takes place in Christian worship, the communication which the individual seeks with the deity in prayer and in the eucharistic service, when, indeed, he behaves, as the traditional churches phrase it, as a “communicant.” The purpose is in large part the same—the purification of the individual, the rehabilitation of his soul as part of the longer-term process of salvation. In Scientology there are two fundamental forms of such communication—auditing and training.

Auditing, occurring as private communication by the individual with his (the thetan’s) past, is mediated by the auditor and the E-Meter, but it is essentially a process of bringing the individual into better rapport with his true and original self, and in this sense seeks to put him in contact with a basic spiritual reality.

Training in the Scientology Scripture is communication with the fundamental truths and ground of existence. Through increased understanding the individual seeks greater communication with his basic self, with others and with all life. These activities, too, share elements characteristic of worship, even if such aspects as adoration (of a deity), antiquated concern for his propitiation, and the ancient procedures of supplication are, in this modern context, superseded.

VIII.IX. THE SCIENTOLOGY GOAL OF SURVIVAL

The key term which reveals the purpose of the services that are conducted in a Scientology chapel is “survival”, a concept recurrently emphasized in Scientological literature. “Survival” is, however, merely a modern synonym for the old religious concept, “salvation,” and salvation is the primary objective of worship in all religions, the establishment of rapport between powerful deity and dependent votary which will result in the diminution or elimination of untoward and evil experiences, and the multiplication of benefits culminating in the final benefit of continuing life. Scientology is concerned with the salvation of the thetan, its liberation from the encumbrance of matter, energy, space and time, and, in the more proximate instance, with its capacity to overcome bodily disabilities and the vicissitudes of daily life. The thetan, as the trans-human essence, or soul, existed before the physical body and has prospect of surviving it. That survival is ultimately linked to the survival of the Eighth Dynamic, the Supreme Being, and the Scientology services of auditing and training to enhance the consciousness of this ultimate reality. The practice is thus an occasion for participants to renew and reinforce their recognition of the supernatural. In the wide sense that we have explored above, this is an occasion for worship and enlightenment.

VIII.X. AUDITING AND TRAINING

The core activities of Scientology are auditing and training. These are the agencies of spiritual salvation. Only by these means can the thetan—that is, the individual—be liberated and achieve the spiritual state of being “at cause” over life and the material world. Auditing, in which the individual confronts his own past pain and traumas, helps him to establish control of his life and frees him from the irrational impulses of the reactive mind. Thus, in being audited, the preclear may be said to be embarking on a spiritual quest for salvation, the benefits of which are accretive, and which lead ultimately to a condition in which the thetan ceases to be “enturbulated” with material conditions (MEST). Such a spiritual quest, with salvation as its ultimate end, divergent as may be the outward forms and doctrinal specifications, is the central overriding concern of all the world’s advanced religions.

Training is directed to communicating wisdom to anyone who is seeking enlightenment as well as to those who engage in helping others in their endeavour to attain salvation. Implicit in these processes is the demand that the individual face up to his own painful past experiences and overcome the tendency to transfer blame to others for his own failings. Training to this end is achieved through a series of hierarchically graduated courses in which the student learns and perfects the techniques of auditing which, once the appropriate standard is attained, is believed to be effective in application to any preclear. Training is organised as an intensive programme, and anyone who has witnessed the concentrated dedication of those undergoing training courses, as I have on visits to the Church of Scientology at Saint Hill Manor, could not but be impressed by the single-mindedness and seriousness of purpose uniformly manifested by the students, which is, of course, a religious commitment.

VIII.XI. THE ERROR OF SEGERDAL

Scientology is a religion the organisation of which is not primarily along traditional congregational lines. At a time when, in the face of the contemporary communications revolution, the established churches are beginning to recognize the limitations of congregational structures and to experiment with other patterns of worship, Scientology has already evolved a new and more intensive procedure of spiritual ministration. The one-to-one relationship required by auditing and the intensive system of training of auditors constitute a pattern of care for the spiritual progress of each specific individual which far exceeds in its pastoral concern anything which could be offered by conventional forms of congregational ministry.

Contrary to common understanding, the status of Scientology's practices as worship has yet to be addressed in the Courts. In an early case, *Regina v. Registrar-General Ex parte Segerdal and Another*, 1970, the central issue was whether a building the Church of Scientology maintained in East Grinstead qualified as a "place of meeting for religious worship" on the ground the services the Church conducted there conformed to the criteria which were held to determine what constituted worship. These services consisted of such ceremonies as weekly sermons and other gatherings, christenings, funeral services and wedding ceremonies. Although in this case Lord Denning ruled that these particular services did not constitute worship, in actual fact the core of religious practice in the Church of Scientology lies in the procedures of auditing and training. For Scientologists, it is in these activities that worship occurs—as communication with spiritual reality—not in the services addressed by the Court in *Segerdal*. Of course, these worship activities may not conform to the model invoked by courts that have Christian worship in mind, since it is not reverence for a deity but it is worship in the understanding of its practitioners.

It is apparent from what has been suggested above (Paras VIII.I–VIII.VI) that by no means do all religions postulate a supreme being. In the *Segerdal* case, Lord Denning referred to Buddhism as an exception from the principle he espoused, and said that there might be other exceptions. Why should not Scientology be one of them? If there are exceptions, is not the principle itself put into question and the definition which is used thereby nullified? The tendency to return, despite discussion of exceptions, to emphasis on a Supreme Being as a necessary element in worship indicates the extent to which culturally conditioned assumptions persist in spite of contrary evidence from other cultures. In fact, of course, Scientology does acknowledge a Supreme Being, but conceives of that entity as something which cannot easily be apprehended, and with which communication, at this stage of human enlightenment, is a rare thing. Thus, while Scientology postulates a Supreme Being, it is not presumed that men can normally lay claim to intimate knowledge of that Being. This in itself betokens a form of humility, which is sometimes lacking in religions in which individuals are encouraged to make bolder claims to know the will and mind of God.

In view of this limited apprehension of the Supreme Being, the attitudes of dependence, familiar in Christianity, together with supplication, veneration, praise and intercession become inappropriate. They would be no less appropriate for Christians who endorsed the formulae defining the Supreme Being advanced by modern theologians (see Para IV.II). Reverence is not lacking among Scientologists, who take creation itself as an object of reverence, but without a God conceived in anthropomorphic terms, the elements and form of worship found

in the Judaeo-Christian tradition become inapplicable. When the essence of worship is seen to be its purpose and objectives, rather than its external forms, it is not difficult to admit Scientological practices as a form of worship.

IX. THE APPRAISAL OF SCIENTOLOGY BY ACADEMICS

IX.I. ACADEMIC APPRAISALS OF WHAT CONSTITUTES RELIGION

Academic appraisal of what constitutes religion is ultimately based on observation of human behaviour: the observable phenomena provide the appropriate empirical evidence in deciding the indicia of religion as it is practised. The development of academic disciplines that are committed to objectivity, detachment, and ethical-neutrality, and the decline in influence of normative approaches (typically found in Theology) has provided new bases for the assessment of what constitutes religion.

IX.II. THE RELIGIOUS STATUS OF SCIENTOLOGY AS APPRAISED BY ACADEMICS

Academic sociologists, in whose field the objective study of religious movements falls, generally recognize Scientology as a religion. An essay on Scientology is included in *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, edited by Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), in which the author refers without question to Scientology as a religion. In a work edited by the British sociologist, Eileen Barker, *Of Gods and Men: New Religious Movements in the West*, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1983), Scientology is discussed unproblematically as a religion in three of four papers which devote attention to this particular movement. In the fourth paper (*Participation Rates in New Religious and Para-religious Movements* by Frederick Bird and William Reimer of Concordia University, Montreal), Scientology is referred to *en passant* as a new therapy movement and, implicitly, as a para-religious movement. However, the authors say of Scientology and some other groups that they had been included “because in their symbolism and ritual, in strikingly similar ways, they seek to give birth to a reservoir of sacred power within each person...” (p. 218). In another work, also edited by Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), Scientology is mentioned only briefly by some of the various authors, but nowhere is there any suggestion that Scientology is other than a religious movement, and it is included in a glossary of New Religious Movements at the end of the volume.

In a short study devoted to sectarianism by the present writer, [Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects*, (London: Weidenfeld; and New York, MacGraw Hill, 1970)] which presented a classification of types of sect, Scientology was included: I regarded it (and still regard it) as unquestionably a religious body. In that work, Scientology was classified as similar in sociological type to Christian Science, Theosophy, the Aetherius Society, and various New Thought movements (such as the Church of Religious Science, the Unity School of Christianity, and Divine Science).

In 1990, I published a book, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), a collection of studies of various sects and new religious movements. One chapter, entitled “Scientology: A Secularized Religion,” was specifically devoted to the question of whether Scientology could be considered to be a religion and concluded that Scientology should indeed be recognized as a religion, and one that embraced concepts and precepts that were congruent with contemporary secularized and rationalized society.

More recent sociological studies adopt the same stance. Thus, Dr. Peter Clarke, Director for the Centre for New Religions at King’s College, London, in assessing the size and growth of new religious movements in Europe, in his book *The New Evangelists* (London: Ethnographica, 1987), does not hesitate to include Scientology as a religion. In his book, *Cult Controversies: Societal Responses to the New Religious Movements*, (London: Tavistock, 1985), Professor James A. Beckford, now Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, employs—as a gesture to public preconceptions—the term “cult”, but he does so only after disavowing any pejorative connections in this usage. More important, however, is the fact that, without any qualification, he acknowledges Scientology to be a religion. He writes (p. 12), “Sociologists [are] in disagreement over the appropriate designation for religious groups such as the Unification Church, Scientology, the Children of God, and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness...” That disagreement relates to whether such movements should be designated as sects, cults, or simply as new religious movements—but that they are all religions, Beckford’s discussion leaves the reader in no doubt. Most authoritative of all, Professor Eileen Barker of the London School of Economics, and founder and former Director of INFORM (Information Network Focus on New Religious Movements), an organisation directly supported financially by the Home Office, wrote a book *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1989) specifically intended to provide the public (and especially the relatives of converts) with accurate information about new religions and how to deal with them. In that work, she takes it for granted that Scientology is part of her subject matter as a religion (p. 147) and includes the Church of Scientology in an appendix in which some twenty-seven new religious movements are described.

IX.III. IS SCIENTOLOGY A RELIGION?—PROFESSOR FLINN

In a collection of scholarly papers edited by the Jesuit sociologist, Professor Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., of Loyola University, New Orleans, (*Alternatives to American Mainline Churches*, New York: Rose of Sharon Press, 1983), Frank K. Flinn, now Adjunct Professor in Religious Studies at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, addresses directly the question of the religious status of Scientology in great detail. He considers first the religious status of Dianetics:

Many commentators claim that Scientology is mental therapy masquerading as a religion. The crux of the question, however, is whether one can separate therapy from religion or even from philosophy by a hard-and-fast rule. The word *therapeuo* (to heal, cure, restore) occurs frequently in the New Testament, and refers to both spiritual and physical healings by Jesus of Nazareth...

While Dianetics had religious and spiritual tendencies, it was not yet a religion in the full sense of the term... Dianetics did not promise what may be called 'transcendental' rewards as the normal outcome of its therapy. It did, however, promise 'trans-normal' reward... Secondly, in the Dianetics stage of the movement, engrams were traced back to the fetal stage at the earliest... Thirdly, Dianetics had only four 'dynamics' or 'urges for survival'—self, sex, group and Mankind... Fourthly, the auditing techniques in the Dianetics phase [did not use] the 'E-Meter'.

There has been much debate as to when Scientology began to be a religion. One can point to the incorporation of the Hubbard Association of Scientologists in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1952, and then to the establishment of the Founding Church of Scientology in 1954. Legal incorporation, however, does not tell us when specifically religious concepts took shape in the church's self-understanding. These debates, however, remind one of the nineteenth century disputes on when Christianity began: during Jesus' life time? at Pentecost? through the ministry of Paul and the Apostles? (pp. 96–7)

Flinn then considers the four factors outlined above in the transition from Dianetics to Scientology, noting that the first factor, the shift to transcendental goals, is marked by the shift from the goal of 'Clear' to the goal of establishing the 'Operating Thetan', and adds: "The concept 'thetan' no longer refers to a mental state but is analogous to the Christian concept of 'spirit' or 'soul' which is immortal and is above both brain and mind." (p. 98) Secondly, engrams were now related to past lives. Third, new dynamics were added to include the survival of

animals, the material universe, the spirit, and infinity. And fourth, the E-Meter was introduced, of which he says: “From the perspective I am suggesting, ...the use of the E-Meter is better seen as a ‘technological sacrament’. Just as Christians define a sacrament (e.g., baptism) as an ‘outward and visible sign of inward or invisible grace’, so Scientologists see the E-Meter as an external and visible indicator of an internal and invisible state (‘Clear’).” (p. 99)

Flinn adds this further comment:

The word religion is derived from *religare* which means ‘to bind back together’. This leads me to the broad definition of religion as a system of beliefs expressed in symbols which binds together the lives of individuals and/or groups, which issues in a set of religious practices (rituals), and which is sustained by an organised mode of life. The beliefs, practices and mode of life bind together the lives of people so as to give their existence ultimate meaning. While all religions have rudimentary elements of all three aspects, some, for example, stress the organizational system, or mode of life, over the belief system or the ritual practices. In Scientology, we see an example of a group that began with religious practices (the auditing techniques), soon developed a strong ecclesiastical structure, and only then formalised its belief system into a creed. This does not mean that the belief system was not latent in the earlier phases of the church’s evolution. It simply was not codified in a formal manner [in the way in which] the organizational technology was from the start. (pp. 104–5)

By “strong ecclesiastical structure”, Flinn alludes to the general organisation of Scientology, its system of hierarchically arranged courses and auditing procedures.

X. SCIENTOLOGY AND OTHER FAITHS

X.I. SOME SIMILARITIES OF SCIENTOLOGY AND OTHER FAITHS

Scientology differs radically from traditional Christian churches and dissenting sects in matters of ideology, practice, and organization. Yet, taking the broad view which, in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society must prevail, it is evident that in all essentials, Scientology occupies a position very close to that of other movements that are indisputably religions. Ideologically, it has significant resemblances to the Sankhya school of Hinduism. In its congregational activities, which are, however, far less central to it than is the case with Nonconformist movements, there are, none the less, points of emphasis not dissimilar to those of some Nonconformist

bodies. Its soteriological goals are emphatically metaphysical, and resemble in some respects those of Christian Science.

X.II. DUAL MEMBERSHIP

A distinctive feature of Scientology is that members are not required to abandon other religious beliefs and affiliations on taking up Scientology. It might be inferred from this feature that Scientology contented itself with being a merely additional or supplementary set of beliefs and practices, but such an inference would be unwarranted. I have spoken with senior Church officials as well as individual Scientologists on this aspect of Scientology and their response was that while exclusivity is not required, it comes about as a matter of practice. According to them, as one becomes more involved with Scientology, one inevitably discards one's prior faith. For example, my experience is that a Jew who becomes a Scientologist might remain affiliated with Judaism for cultural reasons and might celebrate Jewish holidays with family and friends, but he or she would not practise and would not believe in Jewish theology. From my view as a scholar this explanation seems correct. Scientologists regard their faith as a complete religion demanding dedication of its members.

Further, while it is a characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim tradition that religious commitment be exclusive and that dual or multiple membership is not tolerated, this principle is far from universal among religions. It is not demanded in most branches of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Buddha did not prohibit the worship of local gods. Hinduism is tolerant in respect of plural allegiances. In Japan, large numbers of people count themselves as both Buddhists and Shintoists. The symbiosis of religions is a well-known phenomenon and in certain respects it has occurred in Christianity (for example, in the tolerance of Spiritualism or Pentecostalism by certain Anglican Bishops, even though these belief-systems were not specifically accommodated by official doctrine). The fact that Scientology adopts a different position respecting dual or multiple affiliations from that conventionally assumed in Western Christianity is not a valid ground for denying it the status of a religion.

X.III. EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC ELEMENTS OF SCIENTOLOGY

The public image of Scientology does not conform to general stereotypes of religion. Its literature may be divided into a widely circulated exoteric literature, and an esoteric literature.

The exoteric literature is concerned principally with the basic principles of Scientology metaphysics and their practical application in helping people to cope with their problems of communication, relationships, and the maintenance of intelligence, rational, and positive orientations to life. The restricted corpus of esoteric literature, which is made available only to advanced students of Scientology, presents both a fuller account of the metaphysics of the religion and more advanced techniques of auditing. It sets out in further detail the theory of the theta (primal thought of spirit); its deterioration by becoming involved in the material universe of matter, energy, space, and time in the process of past lives; and indicates the way in which man can acquire—strictly said, re-gain—supernatural abilities. Only Scientologists who are well-advanced are considered capable of grasping the import of this exposition of the belief-system and of fully comprehending the higher levels of auditing procedures set out in the esoteric literature.

In distinguishing between exoteric and esoteric teachings, Scientology is by no means unique among religions. On the principle enunciated by Jesus “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12) and by Paul in distinguishing strong meat for seasoned believers from milk for babes (I Cor. 3:1–3; and Hebrews 5:12–14), various Christian movements have maintained a distinction between elementary and advanced doctrines and practices. The general gnostic tradition at the fringes of Christianity was explicitly committed to the preservation of esoteric doctrines, and contemporary movements sometimes categorized by scholars as “gnostic-type” sects commonly make such distinctions. An example is Christian Science, the general teachings of which are augmented by subjects taught to those aspiring to become recognized practitioners by designated teachers in special classes, the content of which is confidential. Apart from these cases, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints admits to its special ceremonies only those Mormons who are in good standing and receive a permit from their bishop: that indicates, *inter alia*, that they have been fulfilling their commitment to tithe 10 percent of their earnings to the church: no others are allowed to see these rituals. Close to the Protestant mainstream, Pentecostals often disclose the full significance of their teaching and practice of “the gifts of the Spirit” only at designated services and not at those meetings designed to attract the non-Pentecostal public. The justification for such differentiation is also an educational principle—advanced material is available only to those who have undergone earlier and more elementary instruction which enables them to assimilate higher levels of instruction. This is the position taken by Scientology, the teachings of which require concentrated and systematized endeavour from students.

XI. INDICIA OF RELIGION APPLIED TO SCIENTOLOGY

XI.I. THE ELIMINATION OF CULTURAL BIAS

There are various distinct difficulties in appraising new religious movements. One is that there are, in most societies, unspoken assumptions concerning religion that put a premium on antiquity and tradition. Religious usage and expression is frequently legitimized by specific reference to tradition. Innovation in matters of religion is not easily promoted or accepted. A second problem is the strong normative stance of orthodoxy (particularly in the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition) which proscribes deviations and which uses a heavily pejorative language to describe them (“sect”, “cult”, “nonconformity”, “dissent”, etc.). A third problem is alluded to in foregoing paragraphs, namely, that it is peculiarly difficult for those acculturated in one society and brought up in one religious tradition to understand the belief-system of others, to empathize with their religious aspirations, and to acknowledge the legitimacy of their means of expression. Religious ideas encapsulate certain cultural biases and blinker vision. But, in seeking to interpret a movement like Scientology, it is indispensable that these obstacles be recognized and transcended. This does not imply that to understand a set of religious ideas one must accept them as true, but a certain rapport must be established if the convictions of those of other faiths are to be given appropriate respect.

XI.II. THE CASE THUS FAR

The foregoing discussion is necessarily wide-ranging and discursive, involving *en passant* comparisons with other religious movements, and a review of literature produced by Scientologists and literature about Scientology by academic commentators. The history, doctrines, practices, and religious organization and moral implications of Scientology have been briefly surveyed with particular attention to those facets most at issue in the present appraisal of the religious status of the movement. Such an assessment, in which many pertinent considerations have been brought forward, satisfies the contention that Scientology is a religion. However, since we have attempted (para II.I above) to set out in terms of abstract generalization those features and functions which are of wide distribution, and hence of high probability, in religious systems, it is now appropriate to bring this model into deliberate use as a bench-marker for Scientology’s claim to be a religion. There are wide divergences between the terminology used in Scientology and in the specifications of the model, but this might, at least to some extent, be the case for many—perhaps all—religious movements. None the less,

allowing for the generality of the abstract concepts employed, it should be possible to perceive, without undue difficulty or potential for disagreement, the extent to which Scientology meets the desiderata of the inventory we have produced.

XI.III. SCIENTOLOGY IN LIGHT OF THE INDICIA OF A RELIGION

We now compare the attributes of Scientology with the probabilistic inventory of the features and functions of religion set out in Para II.I above. We note those items in which Scientology agrees, as Accord or Qualified Accord; those in which it does not correspond, as Non-Accord, or Qualified Non-Accord and other cases as Indeterminate.

- (a) Thetans are agencies which transcend normal sense perception. It is also noted that Scientology affirms the existence of a supreme being. Accord.
- (b) Scientology postulates that thetans created the natural order. Accord.
- (c) Thetans occupy human bodies, which amounts to continuous intervention in the material world. Accord.
- (d) Thetans operated before the course of human history, and are said to have created the physical universe and occupy bodies for their own pleasure, identity and the playing of a game. This is, however, an indefinite purpose and the Supreme Being in Scientology is not represented as having definite purposes. Qualified Accord.
- (e) The activity of thetans and the activity of human beings are identical. The future lives of the thetan will be profoundly affected in so far as he gains release from the reactive mind, in addition to being profoundly affected by the same process in his present lifetime. Accord.
- (f) Auditing and training are means by which an individual can influence his destiny, certainly in this life and in the lives of the bodies which he may later occupy. Accord.
- (g) Rituals as symbolism in the traditional sense of worship (e.g., Catholic Mass) are minimal and rudimentary in Scientology, as they are among Quakers, but they do exist. None the less, to adopt a conservative position, we may regard this item as Indeterminate.

- (h) Placatory action (e.g., sacrifice or penance) is absent from Scientology. The individual seeks wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. Non-Accord.
- (i) Expressions of devotion, gratitude, obeisance and obedience to supernatural agencies are virtually absent, except in the rites of passage prescribed in Scientology. Non-Accord.
- (j) Although Scientology has a distinctive language which provides a means of reinforcement of values internal to the group, and the Scripture or teachings of L. Ron Hubbard are held sacred in the popular connotation of the term, this cannot be said to conform to the technical sense of sacred, as “things set apart and forbidden.” Non-Accord.
- (k) Performances for celebration or collective penance are not a strong feature of Scientology, but in recent years the movement has developed a number of commemorative occasions, including the celebration of the anniversary of Hubbard’s birth, the date of the founding of the International Association of Scientologists, and a date celebrating auditors for their dedication. Qualified Accord.
- (l) Scientologists engage in relatively few collective rites, but the movement’s teachings do provide a total Weltanschauung, and so do draw members into a sense of fellowship and common identity. Qualified Accord.
- (m) Scientology is not a highly moralistic religion, but concern for moral propriety has grown as the full implications of its metaphysical premises have been realized. Since 1981, the moral expectations of Scientologists have been clearly articulated: these resemble the commandments of the Decalogue, and make more explicit the long-maintained concern to reduce “overt acts” (harmful acts). The doctrines of the reactive mind and reincarnation embrace ethical orientations similar to those of Buddhism. Accord.
- (n) Scientology places strong emphasis on seriousness of purpose, sustained commitment and loyalty to the organization and its members. Accord.
- (o) The teachings of transmigration in Scientology meets this criterion fully. The accumulative reactive mind corresponds to demerit for the thetan, and such demerit can be reduced by the application of Scientological techniques. Accord.

- (p) Scientology has functionaries who serve primarily as “confessors” (auditors), some of whom are also chaplains whose tasks are primarily expository and pastoral. Auditors, course supervisors, and chaplains (in fact all staff members) seek to preserve Scientology theory and practice from contamination, and in this sense are custodians. Accord.
- (q) Auditors, course supervisors and chaplains are paid. Accord.
- (r) Scientology has a body of metaphysical doctrine which offers an explanation for the meaning of life and its purpose, and an elaborate theory of human psychology, as well as an account of the origin and of the operation of the physical universe. Accord.
- (s) The legitimacy of Scientology is in a form of revelation by L. Ron Hubbard. Hubbard’s own sources include mention of the ancient wisdom of the Orient, but are claimed to be almost exclusively the results of research. This mixture of appeal to tradition, charisma, and science has been found in other modern religious movements, conspicuously, Christian Science. Qualified Accord.
- (t) Claims to the truth of some of Scientology’s doctrines are beyond empirical test, but the efficacy of auditing is said to be provable pragmatically. The goals of Scientology depend on faith in the metaphysical aspects of the doctrine, however, even if the means are claimed to be susceptible to empirical test. Qualified Accord.

XI.IV. THE COMPARISON REVIEWED

The foregoing appraisal of Scientology in the light of the probabilistic inventory of religion results in eleven items in which there is accord; five items on which there is qualified accord; three items on which there is no accord; and one item which is indeterminate. It cannot be assumed that these various features and functions of religion have equal weight of course, and the numerical count should not produce an unduly mechanistic basis for assessment. Some items—for example, the existence of a paid body of specialists—although common to religions, are not confined to religions, and may therefore be deemed to be of less import than some other items. Similarly, the placatory element that is common in religion might be held to be merely a residual feature of earlier patterns of quasi-magical dependence from which more recently instituted religious organisations may have freed themselves. Whilst most traditional

religions would meet most of these probabilities, many well-recognized denominations would be out of accord with some of them. We have noted this of Quakers with respect to worship, and of Christian Science with respect to legitimation. Unitarians would fall short on a number of items—worship, sacralization, traditional concepts of sin and virtue, and perhaps on the significance of metaphysical teaching. Neither Christadelphians nor Quakers would meet the criteria relating to religious specialists or their payment.

XI.V. SCIENTOLOGISTS PERCEIVE THEIR BELIEFS AS A RELIGION

The use of the foregoing inventory should not be allowed to create an impression that the findings set forth in this opinion rely on formal or abstract reasoning alone. The inventory is a basis against which empirical evidence—that is: observed behaviour—is assessed. Many Scientologists have a strong sense of their own religious commitment. They perceive their beliefs and practices as a religion, and many bring to them levels of commitment which exceed those normally found among believers in the traditional churches. In this respect, many Scientologists behave like members of Christian sects, who are generally more intensely committed to their religion than are the vast majority of believers in the old-established churches and denominations. As a sociologist, I see Scientology as a genuine system of religious belief and practice which evokes from its votaries deep and earnest commitment.

XI.VI. CONTEMPORARY CHANGE IN RELIGION *TOUT COURT*

We have noted that all religions have undergone a process of evolution: they change over time. It is also the case that religion *per se* undergoes change. As a social product, religion takes on much of the colour and character of the society in which it functions, and newer movements reveal characteristics that were not found in older movements (at least at the time of their origin). Today, new developments in religion make it apparent that there is much less concern with a posited objective reality “out there”, and more interest in subjective experience and psychological well-being; less concern, therefore, with traditional forms of worship, and more with the acquisition of assurance (which is itself a type of salvation) from other sources than the supposed comfort afforded by a remote saviour-god. We must, therefore, expect this emphasis to become apparent in the inventory that we have used as a model. The model reflects a great deal that remains extant in religion but which derives from ancient practice. Newer religions—even religions as old as the major Protestant denominations—will not find accord with all these elements: they reflect the characteristics of the evolutionary stage at which they came into being. We must, therefore, allow that

modern movements will not be in accord with all items in our (relatively timeless) model. Taking all of this into account, it is clear to me that Scientology is a bona fide religion and should be considered as such.

BRYAN RONALD WILSON

February 1995

BRYAN RONALD WILSON

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For more than forty years, he has conducted research into minority religious movements in Britain and overseas (in the United States, Ghana, Kenya, Belgium and Japan, among other places). His work has involved reading the publications of these movements and, wherever possible, associating with their members in their meetings, services, and homes. It has also entailed sustained attention to, and critical appraisal of, the works of other scholars.

He holds the Degrees of B.Sc. (Econ) and Ph.D. of the University of London and the M.A. of the University of Oxford. In 1984, the University of Oxford recognized the value of his published work by conferring upon him the Degree of D.Litt. In 1992, the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, awarded him the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa. In 1994, he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

At various times he has held the following additional appointments:

Commonwealth Fund Fellow (Harkness Foundation) at the University of California, Berkeley, United States, 1957–8

Visiting Professor, University of Ghana, 1964

Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, at the University of California, Berkeley, United States, 1966–7

Research Consultant for the Sociology of Religion to the University of Padua, Italy, 1968–72

Visiting Fellow of The Japan Society, 1975

Visiting Professor, The Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium 1976, 1982, 1986, 1993

Snider Visiting Professor, University of Toronto, Canada, 1978

Visiting Professor in the Sociology of Religion, and Consultant for Religious Studies to the Mahidol

University, Bangkok, Thailand, 1980–1

Scott Visiting Fellow, Ormond College, University of Melbourne, Australia, 1981

Visiting Professor, University of Queensland, Australia, 1986

Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A., 1987

For the years 1971–5, he was President of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse* (the world-wide organization for the discipline); in 1991 he was elected Honorary President of this organization now renamed as *Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions*.

Council Member of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (U.S.A.) 1977–9

For several years, European Associate Editor, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

For six years, Joint Editor of the *Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion*.

He has lectured on minority religious movements extensively in Britain, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Japan, and the United States, and occasionally in Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

He has been called as an expert witness on sects in courts in Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa and has provided evidence on affidavit for courts in Australia and in France. He has also been called upon to give expert written evidence on religious movements for the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons.

