

SCIENTOLOGY:
THE MARKS
of
RELIGION



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I. INTRODUCTION

I am currently self-employed as a writer, editor, lecturer and consultant in the fields of theology and religion. I also serve as Adjunct Professor in Religious Studies at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy (1962) from Quincy University, Quincy, Illinois; a Bachelor of Divinity degree (1966), *magna cum laude*, from Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and a Ph.D. in Special Religious Studies (1981) from the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario. I have also done advanced study at Harvard University, the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and the University of Pennsylvania. At the University of Heidelberg, I was a Fulbright Fellow in Philosophy and Ancient Near Eastern Religions, 1966–67. At the University of Pennsylvania, I was a National Defense Foreign Language Fellow, Title VI, in Semitic languages, 1968–69.

Since 1962 I have devoted intense study to religious sectarian movements, ancient and modern. A portion of my doctoral studies was focused specifically on the rise of new religious movements in the United States and abroad since World War II. That study included the investigation of new religions in terms of their belief systems, lifestyles, use of religious language, leadership, motivation and sincerity, and the material conditions of their existence. At Washington University I regularly teach a course entitled The North American Religious Experience, which contains a section on new religious movements. Besides a scholarly interest in religions

I have had long-standing personal experience with the religious life. From 1958 to 1964 I was a member of the Order of Friars Minor, popularly known as the Franciscans. During this period I lived under solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and, thus, experienced many of the disciplines typical of the religious life.

Prior to my present position, I taught at Maryville College, St. Louis, Missouri, 1980–81; St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1977–79, where I was Graduate Director of the Masters Program in Religion and Education; the University of Toronto, Ontario, 1976–77, where I was Tutor in Comparative Religion; St. John's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1970–75, where I was Tutor in the Great Books Program; LaSalle College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Summers 1969–73, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies and the Anthropology of Religion; Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, 1967–68, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies; and Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Massachusetts, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies.

I am a member in good standing of the American Academy of Religion. I am a practicing Roman Catholic at All Saints Church, University City, Missouri.

Since 1968 I have lectured and written about various new religious movements which have arisen in the 19th and 20th centuries in North America and elsewhere. In my lecture courses Anthropology of Religion (LaSalle College), Comparative Religion (University of Toronto), The American Religious Experience (St. Louis University), and The North American Religious Experience (Washington University), I have dealt with such religious phenomena as the Great Awakening, Shakerism, Mormon, Seventh-day Adventism, Jehovah's Witness, New Harmony, Oneida, Brook Farm, Unification, Scientology, Hare Krishna, and others. I have published several articles and been general editor of books on the topic of new religions. It is my policy not to testify about a living religious group unless I have long-term, firsthand knowledge of that group. I have testified on various aspects of the new religions before the U.S. Congress, the Ohio Legislature, the New York Assembly, the Illinois Legislature, and the Kansas Legislature. I have delivered lectures on the topic of the new religions at colleges, universities and conferences in the United States, Canada, Japan, the Republic of China, and Europe.

I have studied the Church of Scientology in depth since 1976. I have sufficiently sampled the vast literature of Scientology (its scriptures) to help form the opinions expressed herein. I have visited Scientology Churches in Toronto; St. Louis; Portland, Oregon; Clearwater, Florida; Los Angeles; and Paris, where I have familiarized myself with the day-to-day workings of the Church. I have also conducted numerous interviews with members of the Church of

Scientology. I am also familiar with most of the literature written about Scientology, ranging from objective scholarship to journalistic accounts, both favorable and unfavorable.

As a comparative scholar of religion, I maintain that for a movement to be a religion and for a group to constitute a church, it needs to manifest three characteristics, or marks, which are discernible in religions around the world. Below, I define these three characteristics:

- (a) First, a religion must possess a system of beliefs or doctrines which relate the believers to the ultimate meaning of life (God, the Supreme Being, the Inner Light, the Infinite, etc.).
- (b) Secondly, the system of beliefs must issue into religious practices which can be divided into 1) norms for behavior (positive commands and negative prohibitions or taboos) and 2) rites and ceremonies, acts and other observances (sacraments, initiations, ordinations, sermons, prayers, funerals for the dead, marriages, meditation, purifications, scriptural study, blessings, etc.).
- (c) Thirdly, the system of beliefs and practices must unite a body of believers or members so as to constitute an identifiable *community* which is either hierarchical or congregational in polity and which possesses a spiritual way of life in harmony with the ultimate meaning of life as perceived by the adherents.

Not all religions will emphasize each of these characteristics to the same degree or in the same manner, but all will possess them in a perceptible way.

On the basis of these three markers and of my research into the Church of Scientology, I can state without hesitation that the Church of Scientology constitutes a bona fide religion. It possesses all the essential marks of religions known around the world: (1) a well-defined belief system, (2) which issues into religious practices (positive and negative norms for behavior, religious rites and ceremonies, acts and observances), and (3) which sustain a body of believers in an identifiable religious community, distinguishable from other religious communities.

II. SYSTEM OF BELIEFS

In terms of the Scientology belief system, there exists a vast amount of religious material through which the scholar must wend her or his way. Furthermore, the scholar needs to be

sensitive to the fact that Scientology, like every other religious tradition in history, is organic and has undergone and is undergoing an evolution. One can mention such key scriptures by L. Ron Hubbard as *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, *Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought*, *The Phoenix Lectures*, plus the voluminous training and management manuals, but this would only be the tip of the iceberg of Scientology scriptures. Central to everything are the writings of L. Ron Hubbard, who is the sole source of inspiration for all Scientology doctrines pertaining to auditing and training.

My interviews with Scientologists and my study of its scriptures have shown that members of the Church adhere to a basic creed, in which they confess that mankind is basically good, that the spirit can be saved and that the healing of both physical and spiritual ills proceeds from the spirit. In full, the Scientology creed states:

We of the Church believe

That all men of whatever race, color or creed were created with equal rights.

That all men have inalienable rights to their own religious practices and their performance.

That all men have inalienable rights to their own lives.

That all men have inalienable rights to their sanity.

That all men have inalienable rights to their own defense.

That all men have inalienable rights to conceive, choose, assist or support their own organizations, churches and governments.

That all men have inalienable rights to think freely, to talk freely, to write freely their own opinions and to counter or utter or write upon the opinions of others.

That all men have inalienable rights to the creation of their own kind.

That the souls of men have the rights of men.

That the study of the mind and the healing of mentally caused ills should not be alienated from religion or condoned in nonreligious fields.

And that no agency less than God has the power to suspend or set aside these rights, overtly or covertly.

And we of the Church believe

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.

And 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.

This creed elaborates on and complements the Scientology teaching on the Eight Dynamics. A “dynamic” is an urge, drive or impulse to survival at the levels of the self, sex (including procreation as a family), group, all of mankind, all living things, all the physical universe, spirit, and, finally, Infinity or God. Contrary to some popular presentations of Scientology, the Church has always maintained a belief in the spiritual dimension and, specifically, a Supreme Being. The earliest editions of *Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought* explicitly state: “The Eighth Dynamic—is the urge toward existence as Infinity. This is also identified as the Supreme Being.” (*Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought*. Los Angeles: The Church of Scientology of California, 1956, page 38.) The average believer is expected during his or her adherence to Scientology to realize the self as fully as possible on all eight dynamics and thus develop an understanding of a Supreme Being, or, as the Scientologists prefer to say, Infinity.

Scientologists define the spiritual essence of humanity as the “thetan,” which is equivalent to the traditional notion of the soul. They believe that this thetan is immortal and has assumed various bodies in past lives. The Scientology doctrine of past lives has many affinities with the Buddhist teaching on *samsara*, or the transmigration of the soul. More will be said about the soul under para. III (a).

The Creed of Scientology can be compared with the classic Christian creeds of Nicaea (325 C.E.), the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (1530 C.E.), and the Presbyterian Westminster Confession (1646 C.E.) because, like these earlier creeds, it defines the ultimate meaning of life for the believer, shapes and determines codes of conduct and worship in conformity with that creed, and defines a body of adherents who subscribe to that creed. Like the classic creeds, the Creed of the Church of Scientology gives meaning to transcendental realities: the soul, spiritual aberrancy or sin, salvation, healing by means of the spirit, the freedom of the believer, and the spiritual equality of all.

Following their creed, Scientologists distinguish between the “reactive” or passive (unconscious) mind and the “analytical” or active mind. The reactive mind records what adherents call “engrams,” which are spiritual traces of pain, injury, or impact. The reactive mind is believed to retain engrams that go back to the fetal state and reach further back even into past lives. The theological notion of “engrams” bears close resemblance to the Buddhist doctrine of the “threads of entanglement” which are held over from previous incarnations and which impede the attainment of enlightenment. Scientologists believe that unless one is freed from these engrams, one’s survival ability on the levels of the eight dynamics, happiness, intelligence and spiritual well-being will be severely impaired. It is on the basis of this belief or spiritual knowledge that adherents are motivated to go through the many levels of auditing and training, which constitute the central religious practices of Scientology. I will discuss auditing and training in greater detail in section III. A neophyte or beginner in the auditing/training process is called a preclear and one who has removed all engrams is called a Clear. This distinction can be compared with the Christian distinction between sin and grace and the Buddhist distinction between unenlightenment (Sanskrit, avidya) and enlightenment (bodhi).

Scientologists do not speak of “Clearing” simply in terms of individual well-being. Their belief is that auditing and training have a beneficial effect on the person’s family, group, environment, and sphere of influence. In other words, the beneficial effect takes place on all eight levels of the “dynamics.” Scientologists also believe that they should take responsibility for bettering the world around them and that they should help others attain the state of Clear. They believe that when enough people have attained the Clear state, the central aim of Scientology, as enunciated by L. Ron Hubbard, will have been achieved: “A civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper and honest beings can have rights, and where man is free to rise to greater heights.” (L. Ron Hubbard, *Scientology 0-8: The Book of Basics*, page 3.) In this quest to remove the conditions leading to mistrust, war

and self-destruction, Scientology is no different than all the other missionary or evangelical religions, namely, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Three aspects of Scientology's goal to "Clear the planet" so as to bring about a new civilization demonstrate that the belief system of the Church accords fully with the pattern of the great historic religions, past and present. Those three aspects are (a) its missionary character, (b) its universality, and (c) its quality of ultimate concern and commitment.

(a) First, Scientology's religious quest is envisioned in terms of a sacred mission, addressed and available to one and all. Thus, the prophets of the Bible such as Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, received revelations that they had a mission to address the nations far and wide about peace, justice and love. Thus, too, the Buddhist missionaries of the second century B.C.E. onward sensed a calling to spread the message of the Buddha throughout the Far East, including China, Indochina, Indonesia, Korea and Japan. Today, Japanese Buddhist missionaries are spreading their message to Europe and the Americas. So also, Jesus of Nazareth saw his gospel as having a missionary goal; hence he sent his disciples unto all the nations. The missionary aspect of Islam is so strong that today it is the fastest growing historic religion in the world, especially in Africa and East Asia. In its dedication to "Clear" the planet in order to bring about a new civilization, Scientology's missionary efforts conform entirely to the pattern of the great historic religions.

(b) Secondly, Scientology sees its mission in universal terms. As a result, it has set out to open mission centers in all parts of the world in order to make the auditing and training technology universally available. The most obvious historic parallel to traditional historic religion is Jesus' commission to his disciples: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). In the eighth century B.C.E., the Jewish prophet Amos was called to bring God's word not only to Judah and Israel but also to Damascus, Gaza, Ashkelon, Tyre, Sidon and Edom, all of which were "pagan" Canaanitic city states that did not share Israel's belief in the God of the Fathers (Amos, chaps. 1-2). Today, Muslims are establishing full-scale mosques in cities including London, Los Angeles, Toronto, and even Seoul because they believe in the universal value of the Word of the Prophet Muhammed. Likewise, Buddhist and Hindu Vedanta spiritual leaders are bringing their sacred teachings and forms of life to our shores because they are convinced that their teachings have a universal application. Again, in this respect, Scientology follows the pattern of the historic religions in the worldwide spread of its auditing and training technology, which Scientology missionaries believe will benefit all of humankind.

(c) Thirdly, the dedicated aim of Scientology is to assist enough people to attain the status of “Clear” so that the tide of civilization may turn to the better. This aim has the character of an ultimate concern and commitment. Each of the great historic religions has a central core of teaching which provides its followers a compelling motivation to fulfill its religious mission on a worldwide scale and with a sense of urgency and ultimacy.

For the Buddhist that core teaching is summed up in the religious notion of “release” (*moksa*) from the entangling bonds of craving and the bestowal of bliss in egoless thought (*nirvana*). The Buddhist scripture, *The Dhammapada*, has the Buddha declare: “All the rafters [of my old house] are broken, shattered the roof-beam; my thoughts are purified of illusion; the extinction of craving has been won” (section 154). The ultimacy of this awakening is what motivated and motivates every Buddhist monk and missionary.

As I have noted above, the Scientology belief in past lives is closely related to the Buddhist idea of *samsara*; likewise, the Scientology notion of “Clearing” has close affinities with the Buddhist belief in *moksa*. As Buddhist missionaries in the past sought to make available to all sentient beings “release” from the cravings of existence, so also the Scientologist missionary strives to make available to one and all the opportunity to be rid of engrams which impede universal survival, peace and abundance by becoming “Clear.”

Zen Buddhists in Japan seek to attain *satori*, or “sudden enlightenment,” for all humanity, and the strength of this belief has led them to establish monasteries in the Americas and Europe. The Muslim conviction in the ultimacy of the word of the Prophet Muhammed—summed up in the great shahada: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet”—gives the missionaries of Islam the strength of conviction to seek converts on a worldwide scale. In the Biblical tradition, the most compelling core belief which motivated and still motivates missionary activity is the firm trust that God desires the ultimate salvation and universal redemption of all humankind. Thus the biblical prophet Isaiah saw God’s salvation of all the nations as the new creation of a heavenly Jerusalem on earth in which all flesh would worship the one, true God (Isaiah 66:22–23).

In the New Testament the redemption wrought by God in Jesus the Christ is viewed by the Apostle Paul not simply as the salvation of Christians, or even of all humanity, but as the pledge of universal liberation, restoration and re-creation of the cosmos itself (Romans 8:19–23). In this context the Scientology belief in the mission of “Clearing the planet” to bring about a renewed civilization corresponds in like kind to the ultimacy of conviction which characterizes the motivation and faith of the world’s great historic religions.

III. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

In terms of religious practices, Scientology possesses the typical ceremonial religious forms which are found among the world's religions, namely, initiation or baptism (which is called "naming" by Scientologists), marriage, funerals, etc. However, a central religious practice unique to Scientology is *auditing*, which can be compared to the progressive levels of meditation among Roman Catholics, Buddhists and Hindu Vedantists. Concomitant with auditing is Scientology *training*, which I will discuss at greater length in para. III (b).

(a) Auditing is a religious instructional type of process by which spiritual guides (trained Scientology ministers) lead adherents through the states of spiritual enlightenment. Scientologists believe that by actively going through this gradated auditing process, they help to free the soul, or "thetan," from its entangling afflictions or "engrams." The stages of auditing are called "grades" or "levels," and these are shown on the Scientology "Classification, Gradation and Awareness Chart." This chart depicts metaphorically the span between the lower and higher levels of spiritual existence. Scientologists call the chart "The Bridge to Total Freedom" or, simply, "The Bridge." The Bridge details the spiritual continuum, ranging from negative "unexistence," through middle level "communication," "enlightenment," "ability," and finally to "Clearing," "source," and ultimately "power on all 8 dynamics." The vast bulk of Scientology religious practice is devoted to auditing and training courses for enlightenment and the training of *auditors*, who are the Church's spiritual counselors. These gradated stages are remarkably like the stages and levels of religious and spiritual illumination in the noted Christian treatises *Journey of the Mind into God* by the medieval Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure, and the *Spiritual Exercises* by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. The spiritual goal of auditing is first to become "Clear" of harmful "engrams" and then to become a full "Operating Thetan" (OT) so that one is "at cause," over "life, thought, matter, energy, space and time." While not opposed to consulting physicians for physical ailments, Scientologists are firmly against the use of psychotropic drugs which they believe impede rather than assist the attainment of mental and spiritual healing of the soul.

(b) The other central religious practice of Scientology is *training*, which involves intensive study of the Church's scriptures. Although one important aspect of training is the education of individual auditors capable of ministering auditing to parishioners, auditor training has an equally important individual, spiritual component as well. As discussed below, this spiritual element is in keeping with the emphasis of Scientology and Eastern religions on meditative and instructional worship rather than on celebratory worship which prevails in most Western

religions. Scientology doctrine states that training provides fully one-half of the spiritual benefit parishioners receive in moving up The Bridge.

IV. CHURCH COMMUNITY

As with every religion known to me, Scientology has a communal life and ecclesiastical organization which function both to preserve and express the belief system and to foster the religious practices. In ecclesiastical terms, the Church of Scientology is hierarchical rather than congregational in organization. Congregational religions exercise authority by locally electing ministers of churches, voting on reformulations of belief systems (creeds) and religious practices, as well as church polity. Most Protestant denominations in the United States are congregational in their polity. They exercise authority from the bottom up, so to speak. Hierarchical religions, on the other hand, exercise authority by appointment and delegation from the top down, either from a central religious figure such as the Supreme Pontiff (Pope) in Roman Catholicism and the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism, or from a central executive body such as a synod of bishops or council of elders. My study of the Church of Scientology showed me that it follows the classic hierarchical type of church polity.

I will here give a brief summary of the organization of the Church of Scientology. L. Ron Hubbard, who died in 1986, was and remains the sole source of Scientology religious doctrine and technology, including the upper OT levels. The highest ecclesiastical authority in the Church of Scientology is exercised by Church of Scientology International (CSI) and Religious Technology Center (RTC). CSI is the mother church and has the chief responsibility to propagate the Scientology creed around the world. The all-important function of RTC is to preserve, maintain and protect the purity of Scientology technology and to insure its proper and ethical delivery in accord with the tenets of the faith. RTC functions very much like the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Roman Catholicism.

Scientology Missions International (SMI) functions as the mother church to the mission churches around the world. This structure is very similar to the First Church of Christian Science in Boston, which also serves as the mother church to all other Christian Science churches. In all doctrinal disputes, RTC is the ultimate and final court of appeal in Scientology, just as the Vatican and its congregations are the final courts of appeal in Roman Catholicism.

I need also to mention here the Sea Organization. The Sea Org is composed of Church of Scientology members who take vows of service “for a billion years,” signifying their commitment

to serve the Church in this life and in countless lives to come. The Sea Org has become to Scientology what Jesuits are to Roman Catholicism. From the ranks of the Sea Org have come almost all the Church's leadership.

Scientology sometimes describes itself as “an applied religious philosophy.” Some have used this phrase to argue that Scientology is not a religion. But as noted above, my research into the teachings of the Church and interviews with its members show that Scientology possesses all the marks which are common to religions around the world and throughout history: a well-formed belief system, sustained religious practices, and a hierarchical ecclesiastical polity. Furthermore, the word “philosophy” can have several meanings and is not at all incompatible with the word “religion.” Literally, the word philosophy means “love of wisdom” and every religion known to humankind preaches some sort of “wisdom” or insight into ultimate truth. My interviews with Scientologists showed that adherents consider the word “philosophy” to refer to the ultimate meaning of life and the universe in the religious sense of the term. Scientology's “philosophy” is dependent upon the belief that the soul is immortal and has an eternal destiny. In making use of philosophical concepts and in stressing the application of its teachings, Scientology is certainly no different from any other religion known to me. Religion always links up with philosophy. In his great work the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian in the history of Roman Catholicism, makes use of countless philosophical ideas, terms and constructs borrowed from the Greek philosopher Aristotle and urges the moral application of these “philosophical” notions, yet no one would classify the *Summa* as anything but a religious treatise of the highest order. The phrase “an applied religious philosophy” in no way detracts from Scientology being a bona fide religious faith in the fullest sense of the term.

Western religions—specifically, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—traditionally have been exclusivistic in nature. Each faith claims to be the one true faith by virtue of its own unique religious law, savior, prophet, path to salvation, or interpretation of the ultimate meaning of life and truth. This exclusivistic trait is, on the whole, absent in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism and Taoism. In the East, one and the same person can be initiated into life as a Shintoist, doubly married in Shinto and Christian rites, and finally buried in a Buddhist rite, without having to “choose” which religion is the “right” one. Today even Western Christianity is losing some of its exclusivistic character, as evidenced by various denominations deeply engaged in interreligious theological dialogue and intercommunal religious worship. Such pluridenominationality is not at all surprising and is fully understandable to scholars of religion who study current practices firsthand. Although Scientology has close affinities to both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, it is not

purely non-exclusivistic nor, for that matter, purely exclusivistic. Scientology does not require members to renounce prior religious beliefs or membership in other churches or religious orders. This is in keeping with the pluridenominational temper of our times. Nonetheless, as a practical matter, Scientologists usually become fully involved with the Scientology religion to the exclusion of any other faith. In any event, openness to persons from other religious traditions in no way detracts from Scientology's specific religious identity.

V. SCIENTOLOGY WORSHIP

There is no hard-and-fast definition of worship which can be applied to all forms of religion with complete impartiality. At the end of section II above, on the marks of religion, I noted that every religion will have all three marks (a system of beliefs, religious practices, and religious community) in some way, but no two religions will have them in the precise same degree or in the same manner. These variations are what make religions unique. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and high Anglicanism place an enormous stress on elaborate rituals, including vestments, processions, candles, hymns, icons, holy water, incense, and so forth. On the other hand, in many strict Protestant denominations such as the Brethren, such ornate ceremonial forms are considered slightly superstitious if not outrightly idolatrous. In the branches of Christianity, worship is pared down to the preaching of the Word, maybe a few hymns, and prayer. Among the Religious Society of Friends—commonly known as the Quakers—the Meeting for Worship consists of no external acts at all but is a gathering in silence during which members may or may not share a brief word of inspiration. Likewise, the central act of worship in Buddhist monasteries is totally silent meditation for great periods of time centered not on revering a Supreme Deity but on the extinction of the self and release from the entanglements of existence.

The impossibility of discovering any absolutely rigid and fixed definition of worship necessitates keeping a flexible notion for comparative study. Most dictionary definitions face this problem by including several ideas under the concept of worship. First, worship can include ideas of “rites” and “ceremonies.” Some scholars of religion see rites and rituals as being transformative. In the Christian rite of baptism, for example, an initiate is transformed from one state (sin) to another (grace). In primal societies, the rites of passage transform neophytes from childhood to adulthood. The Scientology auditing process of passing from the state of “preclear” to “Clear” would be transformative in this sense. Conversely, ceremonies are seen as confirmatory; that is, they affirm and confirm the status quo. Various forms of Sabbath and Sunday services are often ceremonies in this sense. Ceremonies confirm to the believing community its status

as a worshipping body and its identity as a denomination. Often, but not necessarily always, accoutrements including vestments, rites and ceremonies are accompanied by elaborate dancing, music, sacred sprinklings and purifications, sacrifices of animals or food, gestures such as blessings, and so forth.

Secondly, scholars of religion universally recognize that rites and ceremonies cannot be the end-all and be-all of worship. Hence, most definitions include further notions such as “practices,” “acts” and “observances.” These further notions are included in common definitions for good reasons. One person’s worship may be another’s superstition. And what may appear to be a meaningless act to one believer—for example, making the sign of the Cross, to a Protestant—may be an act of devotion to another. Thus scholars are compelled to see religious acts in the context of the specific religion as a whole, that is, in terms of the ultimate goals and intentions of the body of believers. The scholar does not have to believe what the believer believes, but if he or she is seriously attempting to understand religious phenomena, that scholar must take a step in the direction of believing as the believer believes. It is only from this stance that the scholar can determine which acts, practices and observances constitute worship in a given religious community.

Under the broader definition of religious worship (acts, practices, observances) we can include such topics as the study of sacred texts, the training of others in the study and recitation of these texts, and various forms of religious instruction. Some religions even imbue these kinds of acts with sacred ceremony. In Japanese Zen monasteries, I have observed Zen novices ceremonially carrying copies of the Lotus Sutra and solemnly committing it to memory through ritualized chanting. The study of the Talmud in Jewish yeshivas takes on a similar ritual character.

In the many varieties of religious worship the scholar can detect two fundamental orientations: One strand of worship is more celebratory and ritual-centered; the other is more instructional and meditation-centered.

The question of whether auditing and training can be forms of worship may naturally arise in the minds of adherents of the mainline religions of the West, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In those religions, worship is chiefly, but not exclusively, centered on public celebrations, feast days, sermons, hymn singing, Sabbath or Sunday worship, and various devotions. Although one can find this form of worship plentifully represented in Eastern religion, there is a fundamental undertone in many strands of Eastern piety which places greater stress on meditation and instruction. As already noted, in Vedanta Hinduism and Zen Buddhism, worship is centered not on celebration but on meditation and the study of *sutras*,

spiritual textbooks. In Zen this spiritual study is often accompanied by meditation on *koans*, short, pithy and often contradictory sayings which aid the devotee in cracking the shell of ordinary consciousness so that he or she may attain *satori*, sudden enlightenment.

While the discovery and codification of the technology of auditing belongs exclusively to L. Ron Hubbard, the Church of Scientology and L. Ron Hubbard himself have always recognized that Scientology has affinities with certain aspects of Hinduism and especially Buddhism. Scientology shares with both religious traditions a common belief that the central process of salvation is the passage from ignorance to enlightenment, from entanglement to freedom, and from obfuscation and confusion to clarity and light. A number of years ago I published an article on Scientology's relation to Buddhism: Frank K. Flinn, "Scientology as Technological Buddhism" in Joseph H. Fichter, editor, *Alternatives to American Mainline Churches*, New York: Paragon House, 1983, pages 89–110. In consonance with these Eastern traditions, Scientology quite logically sees worship not so much in the mode of celebration and devotion but in the mode of meditation and instruction, which stresses awareness, enlightenment, or, to use the Scientology term, "Clearing."

As an important side-note, one would not want to say that the meditational and instructional form of worship is absent in the West. The pious Orthodox Jew believes that the devout study of the Torah or Law is a form, if not *the* form, of worship. Hence, Orthodox Jews set up yeshivas, which are dedicated to the worshipful study of the Torah and the Talmud. A yeshiva is not simply a place for ordinary education; it is also a place of worship. Likewise, Muslims have set up *kuttabs* and *madrassas* for the devout study of the Qur'an. Similarly, many Roman Catholic monastic religious orders, most notably the Cistercians and Trappists, devote the greater part of their worship to silent study and meditation on sacred texts.

On the whole, however, meditation, sacred study and instruction are not perceived as much to be forms of worship in the West as they are in the East. In India, it is a common practice for people in later life to sell all their worldly goods, go to a sacred site, such as Varanasi (Benares) on the Ganges, and spend the rest of their lives, occasionally performing *pujas* or ritual offerings but mostly meditating on divine things. To the ordinary Hindu, such meditation is the highest form of worship possible.

Aside from these discussions, it is abundantly clear that Scientology has both the typical forms of ceremonial and celebratory worship and its own unique form of spiritual life: auditing and training. By way of comparison and contrast, the Roman Catholic church considers all of its seven sacraments as forms of worship. That is why all the sacraments are administered principally

in its churches by ordained clergy. Sacraments are administered outside church premises only under special circumstances such as ministering to the sick. The seven sacraments include baptism, confirmation, confession, reconciliation or confession, the Eucharist, marriage, holy orders and the anointing of the sick and infirm. But the “sacrament of all sacraments” for Roman Catholics is the Eucharist, commonly called the Mass, which celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his presence in the believing community.

So also the Church of Scientology has, so-to-speak, its “sacrament of all sacraments,” namely, auditing and training. The chief religious aim of all practicing Scientologists is to become Clear and attain the status of being an Operating Thetan who has mastery over “life, thought, matter, energy, space and time.” The central religious means to these ends are the complex levels and grades of auditing and training. What the Eucharist is in religious importance to the Roman Catholic, auditing and training is to the Scientologist. As Roman Catholics consider the seven sacraments as the chief means for the salvation of the world, so also Scientologists consider auditing and training the central means of salvation, which they describe as optimum survival on all dynamics.

As a scholar of comparative religion, I would answer the question “Where do Roman Catholics have places of worship?” with the answer “Where the seven sacraments are ministered to adherents as a matter of course.” To the question “Where do Scientologists have places of worship?” I would answer “Where auditing and training in Scientology scripture are ministered to parishioners as a matter of course.” Hubbard’s works on Dianetics and Scientology constitute the sacred scriptures of the Church of Scientology. The vast majority of these works is devoted to what Scientologists call *auditing technology* and the management and delivery of auditing and training to the membership. The sheer preponderance of the emphasis on auditing in Hubbard’s works will convince any scholar of religion that auditing and training are the central religious practices and chief forms of worship of the Church of Scientology.

As a scholar of comparative religion I can assert without hesitation that auditing and training are central forms of worship in the belief system of the Scientologist. Secondly, the places where auditing and training are ministered to adherents are unequivocally Scientology houses of worship.

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