

**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF**  
**NEW AGE**  
**BELIEFS**

**JOHN ANKERBERG, D.MIN.**  
**& JOHN WELDON, PH.D.**

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# SCIENTOLOGY

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## INFO AT A GLANCE

**Description.** Scientology is a novel and eclectic religion drawing from Eastern philosophy, modern psychology, and occult practice. It seeks to release human potential, free the soul, and restore people to their original state as pure, immortal spirit.

**Founder.** L. Ron Hubbard (1911-86).

**How does it claim to work?** Through its “counseling” procedures (termed “auditing”), Scientology alleges to offer the only final solution to mankind’s problems. Auditing

“locates” and “resolves” “engrams,” or past traumatic experiences that allegedly inhibit true spiritual enlightenment.\* Scientology claims it can eventually free the human spirit from its bondage to the material world.

**Scientific evaluation.** While the specific religious tenets of Scientology are incapable of scientific evaluation, many of its stated beliefs that are capable of evaluation run contrary to most basic data in the natural and social sciences.

**Examples of occult potential.** Development of psychic powers, out-of-body experiences, and other occult practices.

**Major problems.** The specific claims of Scientology in many different fields of study are inconsistent with known data; the extent to which Scientology has or has not reformed its past methods of dealing with critics; the rejection of the material world as an “illusion.”

**Biblical/Christian evaluation.** As an occult religion having specific theological beliefs contrary to biblical teaching, membership in the Church of Scientology is prohibited for Christians.

**Potential dangers.** The acceptance of false data carries its own consequences; the physical, psychological, and spiritual hazards associated with occult practice; psychological harm from auditing.

*Note:* This material originally appeared in the *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1993.

## INTRODUCTION AND INFLUENCE

The last generation has seen the proliferation of "New Age" religions that stress common themes, such as human potentialism, spiritism, psychic development, Gnosticism, occult enlightenment, and Eastern philosophy and practice. Examples include The Church Universal and Triumphant, begun by Mark and Elizabeth Claire Prophet; Eckankar, invented by Paul Twitchell; Astará, started by Robert and Earlyne Chaney; Silva Mind Control,\* developed by Jose Silva and the Church of Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard. Scientology is arguably among the most powerful and the most influential of new religions.

In *Faith Founded on Fact*, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery accurately described our own era when he wrote:

Ours is an age of religious cacophony, as was the Roman Empire of Christ's time. From agnosticism to Hegelianism, from devil-worship to scientific rationalism, from theosophical cults to philosophies of process: virtually any world view conceivable is offered to modern man in the pluralistic marketplace of ideas. Our age is indeed in ideological and societal agony, grasping at anything and everything that can conceivably offer the ecstasy of a cosmic relationship or of a comprehensive *Weltanschauung* (2550:152-53).

The Church of Scientology is certainly one of the most intriguing and controversial of the new religions to illustrate Dr. Montgomery's assessment. It promises its adherents complete spiritual freedom and authoritative knowledge concerning the true nature of man and the universe (2547:111/2548:99). The church was founded by Lafayette Ronald Hubbard in California in the 1950s as an extension of his earlier non-religious theory of Dianetics (2549). Dianetics is believed to deal with mind and body; Scientology with the human spirit, although they necessarily overlap in places. According to the church, technically "para-Scientology" is that branch of "Scientology" involving past lives, mysticism, the occult, etc. (2551:189). For our purposes, the term "Scientology" is employed in its broadest sense.

Drawing upon ideas from Buddhist and Hindu religious philosophy, science fiction, and Western concepts in psychology and science, L. Ron Hub-

bard produced a new religion that sees everyone as immortal spirits (thetans) who have forgotten their true identity and became deceived by the very universe they mentally emanated in order to amuse themselves. (This latter view and others are similar to those of est\* inventor Werner Erhard, a student of scientology). Scientology claims that it can free the "thetan" to realize its own "godhood" through certain procedures (controversial ones) that heal the mind and free the spirit.

Although the church claims its beliefs are not incompatible with Christian faith, an evaluation of Scientology and major Bible doctrines show that this assessment is incorrect. Scientology teachings are inconsistent with the beliefs of orthodox Christian faith.

Today, Scientology boasts over 700 centers in 65 countries, with seven million followers. And it is one of the wealthiest new religions claiming assets of over one billion dollars. Screen stars and famous individuals such as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Priscilla Presley, and performer Sonny Bono are only a handful of the Hollywood faithful who actively endorse Scientology. But this new religion also has strong critics, as issues of many popular magazines reveal (e.g., *Reader's Digest*, May 1980, September 1981; and *Time* magazine, May 6, 1991).

## PHILOSOPHY

The basic tenets of Scientology result from an eclectic mixture of Eastern philosophy and Hubbard's personal research into a variety of disciplines, as well as the "data" uncovered from "auditing." Auditing is Scientology's "counseling," an extensive examination of the present or "past lives" of the "preclear" thetan, or initiate. In one of its many definitions, Hubbard has said that Scientology is "the Western anglicized continuance of many earlier forms of wisdom" (2551:177). These include the Vedas, Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Gnosticism, early Greek civilization, and the teachings of Jesus, Nietzsche, and Freud. According to Hubbard, "Scientology has accomplished the goal of religion expressed in all Man's written history, the freeing of the soul by wisdom" (2551:180/cf. 2552:3-17).

Scientology divides the mind into two components, the analytic and the reactive, roughly parallel to the conscious, or rational, mind and unconscious, or "irrational," mind. Experience of extreme shock, pain, or unconsciousness causes "engrams," or sensory impressions, to be recorded in the reactive, or unconscious, mind. These mental pictures are the cause of our emotional and physical problems today (2553). They can be dislodged only through Scientology procedures (2554).

While these memory pictures are perfectly recorded, they lie dormant in the brain until restimulated by a similar incident. When restimulated, they cause conditioned, stimulus-response behavior that is counterproductive to a person's well-being. Thus, when the brain sees a situation similar to a past negative experience, even if it is not a threat to survival, it responds as if it were, producing a form of inappropriate and self-defeating behavior. For example, a boy falls out of a tree just as a red car passes by and is knocked unconscious. Later, even as a man, red cars (even red things) may restimulate the episode in various ways and cause irrational reactions. This man may thus refuse to ride in a red car and may even get ill or dizzy when confronted with the possibility.

In this sense, we are all, more or less, conditioned beings, "machines" that simply respond to their "operator" (i.e., the reactive mind). Scientology believes this restimulation is fairly automatic. In other words, we are not free beings; we are slaves of, in Scientology terms, an "aberrated" (reactive) mind. Scientology maintains that through Dianetic and Scientology therapy, we can be directly exposed to our engrams, "erase" them, and become "clear," or get in control of our behavior ("at cause") rather than be at the mercy of a damaged reactive mind ("at effect").

According to Scientology, we have all been accumulating engrams for trillions of years through reincarnation. Thus, in order to resolve hidden engrams, the initiate must be mentally whisked back to reexperience the damaging events of this life or previous lives. This fits in nicely with each person being a thetan, an immortal spirit who has been so damaged by engrams that he has forgotten he is

immortal and even that he is a thetan. Thetans have absolute control over bodies, but, sadly, they think they are bodies (a terrible fate) and hence are bound by the MEST (matter, energy, space, time) universe. Each time a body dies, a thetan must enter another body, but this brings with it all its trillions of years' accumulation of engrams. Thetans thus are no longer free but bound to the material universe (2555). Thus, Scientology claims that it can free the thetan.

## THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS

In light of the religious claims of Scientology, we have chosen to emphasize its theological presuppositions in six fundamental categories: God, Man, creation, salvation, death, and the supernatural.

### *God*

In the Church of Scientology, the concept of God would appear to be partly panentheistic and perhaps polytheistic. Panentheism refers to the belief that the world and all finite entities are within God but that God is more than the world. When Scientology defines God as "all Theta" (life), it indicates at least partly a belief in panentheism. However, Scientology also seems to grant thetans the status of ontologically real, independent existence. If thetans, who are eternal, are considered to have divine attributes, or at least "infinite creative potential," and if in some sense each thetan is a "god," then a polytheistic classification could also seem appropriate. Interestingly, the official 1965 Australian government inquiry into Scientology observed that the scores of Scientology axioms (certain stated beliefs) undergird a polytheistic rather than a monotheistic theology, and hence they are thus "quite the reverse of Christian belief" (2556).

What the church refers to as "the Supreme Being" is purposely left undefined and not particularly relevant in Scientology theory or practice. It is variously implied to be or referred to as "Nature," "Infinity," "the Eighth Dynamic," "all Theta" (life), and so forth. Usually the individual Scientologist is free to interpret God in whatever manner he wishes (2557).

### Man

Scientology maintains that, in their true nature, people are not the limited and pitiful body and ego that they mistakenly imagine themselves to be. They are thetans, whose fundamental nature is basically good and divine. They are not morally fallen but simply ignorant of their own perfection. Their only "fall" was into matter, not sin.

How did this fall occur? Apparently, trillions of years ago thetans became bored, so they emanated mental universes to play in, to amuse themselves. Soon, however, they became more and more entranced by their own creation until they were so conditioned by the manifestations of their own thought processes that they lost all awareness of their true identity and spiritual nature (see 2555/2557). In a scholarly analysis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology*, Roy Wallis describes the process:

Progressively they became absorbed into the games they were playing, permitting further limitation of their abilities, imposing limitations upon other thetans, forgetting their spiritual nature, and becoming more dependent upon the material universes that they had created. While the MEST universe began as the postulation of thetans it gradually acquired an overwhelming sense of reality. The thetans became so enmeshed in their creation they forgot their origins and true status, lost the ability to mobilize their spiritual capacities, and came to believe they were no more than the bodies they inhabited (2558:104).

In other words, thetans became hypnotized and trapped by MEST. Compounding the entrapment was the accumulation of endless "engrams" throughout trillions of years of existence. The final result was a pitiful creature, indeed—a materially enslaved entity existing as a mere stimulus-response machine. Today, only slavery to the reactive mind and bondage to the MEST universe (i.e., the physical body and environment) are what remain of once-glorious spiritual beings who ruled the heavens.

In an official church publication, *Scientology: A World Religion Emerges in the Space Age*, we find the Scientology concept of man described as follows:

The THETAN is the *individualized* life force, . . . *the person himself*, . . . the identity that is the Being, per se. . . .

The PERSON in Scientology is (and discovers himself to be) a Thetan (spiritual being) of infinite creative potential who acts in, but is not part of, the physical universe. . . .

The Eternal Indestructible Self (Atman) of the Hindu Upanishads early foreshadowed the Scientology concept of the Thetan. . . .

The Thetan is also considered to be the innate source of his own projected universe, which overlaps the created universes of other Thetans in a great community of souls. Thus is formed the world of the senses, in relation to which, like the Hindu "Lila," or "Divine Play," each Thetan plays the Game of Life in concert with its spiritual partners. . . . As a Being descends . . . into Materiality, the manifestations of his communication become heavier and more dense, and his experience of reality deteriorates (2552:21-24).

### Creation

The universe was not, as the Bible teaches, created by a single Supreme Being *ex nihilo*, thus having a separate existence of its own. The Scientology universe is a subjective, mental emanation, or "projection," of the thetan, having merely an agreed-upon (not actual) reality. Thus, the entire physical universe is a game, a product of thetan ingenuity (apparently designed for escaping boredom) that allegedly emanates from an original thetan consensus to "create" in prehistory (2559). As a product of thetan minds, the physical universe is capable of endless manipulation by an aware or spiritually "enlightened" thetan. Thus, Scientologists may view psychic powers developed through church practices as a confirmation of this teaching. But for a densely ignorant thetan (principally, all non-Scientologists), the universe is a deceptive and deadly spiritual trap. Ignorant thetans are bound by engrams and think they are only physical bodies. As a result, they are weak, impotent creatures enslaved to a material universe that inhibits self-realization of their true nature as an immortal spirit (2559).

In essence, the material creation as we know it is not only an illusion but also a positive evil, a powerfully destructive barrier one must overcome in order to advance spiritually (2560).

### *Salvation*

The pitiful thetan slavery to MEST, ignorance, and imprisonment in a body remained until L. Ron Hubbard discovered the secret nature of humankind and pioneered a universal plan of salvation. Through Scientology auditing processes, engrams can be neutralized and the thetan made increasingly self-aware, or "enlightened." By various techniques, a practical methodology (a "technology of enlightenment") was developed to enable the initiate to recognize his spiritual existence, to separate from the MEST body, and to begin to exert mental control over the MEST universe. In other words, the initiate can eventually achieve a state of "clear" and then, by progressing through numerous levels of "Operating Thetan," increasingly achieve self-realization. (An "Operating Thetan" is one who is more and more aware, or increasingly "operating," in terms of his true thetan abilities; see notes 2559/2560). Eventually, he can return to his former existence and glory.

### *Death*

Death for Scientology is sometimes a positive blessing, for it may permit the release of the soul from the prison of the body, and this would mean the evolution of the thetan (soul) into a higher state of awareness. Nevertheless, in another sense, death is an event so appallingly ordinary (indeed, one which each person has passed through trillions of times) that it is, in effect, an irrelevant incident, almost inconsequential in the larger scheme of things (2561).

### *The Occult*

The employment of psychic powers and out-of-body episodes (these are means by which thetans re-realize their true powers) is indicative of the church's acceptance of the realm of the supernatural. Hubbard's son goes so far as to claim that occultism played a significant role in the development of Scientology. For example, he wrote that "black magic is the inner core of Scientology" (2562). Hubbard himself allegedly confessed that a spirit entity guided him throughout his life (2563:256). And a number of scholarly researchers have verified the occult nature of Scientology (2558:122/2564:582).

### **CRITIQUE**

In spite of many successful legal attempts by the Church of Scientology to inhibit criticism against it (2565), there remains a sizable literature of material available to the researcher. Particularly helpful are: 1) government investigations and reports; 2) transcripts of innumerable court proceedings (whether Scientology functions as plaintiff or defendant); 3) scholarly review in any number of fields related to Scientology theory (e.g., philosophy, medicine, psychology, sociology, theology, ethics); 4) analysis by the popular press and investigative reporting, in both printed and visual media; 5) the published literature of current and former members (2566).

Scientology and Dianetics are certainly not without testable claims, even though the church alleges that Hubbard has at no time made any claims for them (2567:5). Still, Hubbard believed, among other things, that his philosophy and methodology are 1) superior in mental health expertise, 2) (Dianetics) can be a hundred percent successful and increase one's I.Q., 3) can solve humankind's major problems, and 4) are a rational and proven science, except where they impinge upon the study of the spirit (2568). But before Dianetics had evolved into Scientology, it had been examined and critiqued by many experts who questioned the validity of its basic claims (2569).

This is true for Scientology itself. For example, one of the great legal minds of our century is Oxford-educated Lord Chancellor Haisham. He has twice held the highest office open to lawyers in England, that of Lord Chancellor, as well as being the Minister of Education and Minister of Science and Technology. He comments, "I do not feel [Scientology's] philosophical conceptions [are] adequate to support [its] theories. . . . [T]he factual basis on which they claim to have produced good results on individuals do not seem to me to be fully substantiated" (2570:51).

As to its mental-health claims, the application of Scientology techniques has allegedly harmed some people. Problems can arise from occult activity (cf. 278), Scientology processes, and auditor inexperience (2571). They include hallucinations and irrational behavior, other strange

symptoms, severe disorientation, physical sickness, unconsciousness, mental illness, and even suicide (2572). (As the notes will reveal, most of the above hazards were admitted by Hubbard himself, although he maintained they only occurred through misapplication of the “technology” of Scientology.)

Hubbard also claimed that Scientology is a proven science that is rational and utilizes scientific principles. Unfortunately, Hubbard’s often subjective or arbitrary methods contradict this assertion and reveal that, scientifically, his research methodology is questionable or unreliable (2573). Even his son claims that for the multimillion bestseller, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, he did

no research at all. . . . [W]hat he did, really, was take bits and pieces from other people and put them together in a blender and stir them all up—and out came Dianetics! All the examples in the book—some 200 “real-life experiences”—were just the result of his obsessions with abortions and unconscious states. . . . In fact, the vast majority of those incidents were invented off the top of his head. The rest stem from his own secret life, which was deeply involved in the occult and black magic. That involvement goes back to when he was sixteen (2574:113/cf. 2563:270-71).

Furthermore, researchers who have examined the only “scientific” instrument in Scientology, which is allegedly capable of producing “data” (i.e., the “E-Meter,” which is used to “locate” “engrams”), have concluded it is useless as to its claimed abilities. The E-meter is an electric meter which accurately measures variations in the electrical resistance of the human body, like a galvanometer. However, “None of the Scientology theories associated with, or claims made for, the E-meter is justified. They are contrary to the expert evidence which the Board heard . . .” (2556:97/2575:63-66/2558:197).

### *Ethics*

Scientology maintains a strong position outwardly on ethical issues:

The practice of Scientology results in a higher level of ethics and integrity . . . (2567:77).

Millions already believe the Ethics of Scientology carry more weight and honesty than the traditional and confused laws of nations (2576:132).

The Church of Scientology International [is] your link to other honest, ethical people (2577:1).

Unfortunately, Scientology does not always live up well to its own ethical confessions because, in part, its ethics seem to be valid only for those it deems worthy of them. For example, critics of the church may be treated as enemies (2578). We should also note that Scientology has its own unique definition for terms. Words used in the previous quotations, such as “ethics” and “integrity,” carry not only accepted meanings but also Scientological ones (2579).

### *Subjectivism*

This brings us to discuss Scientology’s subjective use of terms, by which data is manipulated to conform to the alleged discoveries and truths of Scientology. Perhaps the most fruitful seedbed for this was Hubbard’s expertise as a science-fiction writer. Many of the themes in Scientology can also be found in his science-fiction works (2580).

For Hubbard, “life is a game,” and this is about the only thing that gives it any real meaning (2581). The various exploits of thetans in the past trillions of years are their *lila* (or sport)—the games they play to keep eternal boredom at bay. Certainly many critics would contend that the adventures of thetans as chronicled in Hubbard’s *A History of Man* and *Have You Lived Before This Life?* should be ranked among his best science-fiction work. But there’s not much difference between fact and fiction in Scientology. Consider one alleged “past-life” incident of a Scientology counselee, as uncovered by a Scientology auditor using his “E-meter”:

The preclear was on Mars without a body 469,476,600 years ago, creating havoc, destroying a bridge and buildings. The people were called by an alarm to temple. PC went and broke the back pew, and the Temple tower. He wandered in town and saw a doll in a window, and got entrapped [inside the doll] trying to move its limbs. People seized it, beat it up, and threw the doll out of the window (30 ft. drop).

The doll was taken roughly to the Temple, and was zapped by a bishop's gun while the congregation chanted "God is Love." When the people left, the doll, out of control, staggered out and was run over by a large car and a steamroller. It was then taken back to the Bishop, who ordered it to be taken (in a lorry with others) to dig trenches or ditches for 2,000 years. (The whole incident took nearly 2,000,000 years.) Then it was taken and the body was removed and the PC was promised a robot body. The thetan (PC) went up to an implant saucer and was dropped at Planet ZX 432 (2582:63-64).

Hubbard himself confesses that truth is so strange one cannot actually distinguish between science fiction and science fact, and he found this principle useful for rejecting or manipulating the "illusions" of conventional knowledge. For example, Hubbard once noted, "One of the closest pieces of work to a thetan is *Alice in Wonderland*. . . . He can mock up [invent, make] white rabbits and caterpillars and Mad Hatters. He'd find himself right in his element" (2583:6). And, "When you look at man's location in the MEST Universe and what he has or has not been through the picture is just incredibly wild . . . it's just too fantastic for words, so of course, nobody would believe it" (2584:4).

If we recall Hubbard's teaching on the material creation, we remember it is an illusion: "The MEST universe can be established easily to be an illusion . . ." (2585:133). It is not that the universe does not exist; rather, it has no objective, independent reality. It is a frivolous mental game of thetans. Conventional reality simply results from the primordial thetan agreement ("mock-up") and no more (2585:107; cf. pp. 106-08/2551:249). Thus, "objective" reality is simply a temporary subjective manifestation of the mind of thetans.

Such a universe, of course, cannot give true objective knowledge about things, for things that per se have no independent existence of their own are capable of endless manipulations and meanings by an aware thetan. For Hubbard, only an unaberrated thetan (one who by means of Scientology is truly enlightened) knows things as they really are and, apparently, Hubbard was the most enlightened thetan of all. Thus, for many Scientologists, *whatever Hubbard says is true*

*really is true*, no matter how fantastic or disharmonious with currently accepted knowledge (see 2576:28-42/2558:249-50).

The end result is that valid information is rejected from almost every category of conventional knowledge Scientology happens to touch upon that rejects its ideas. Thus, Scientology may reject data in medicine, physics, psychiatry and psychology, logic, historical theology, and so on. Why? Perhaps because at best such disciplines only provide us with the largely uncertain or irrelevant data of an illusory material world and, if they conflict with the truths of Scientology, they are doubtful or harmful by definition (see 2586 for illustrations).

## SCIENTOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

As late as 1974 (20 years after the Church of Scientology was founded), at least one book by Hubbard carried the straightforward claim: "Scientology . . . is not a religion" (2587). Nevertheless, it has become a religion, and one in competition with the Christian church.

A survey conducted by the Church of Scientology (the poll involved over 3000 members) determined that the background of Scientologists is predominantly Christian (41 percent Protestant, 26 percent Catholic, 21 percent with no religious affiliation, 7 percent Jewish, 5 percent other). A full 70 percent report that they still considered themselves a practicing member of their Christian faith, which means that almost half of those polled still considered themselves Christian (2567:246-47; cf. 2558:72). That 37 percent had received college degrees, and 80 percent were from the middle class, indicates that Scientology also appeals to an educated class of people.

And yet, with many being recruited from Christian churches, the response of Christianity has been almost nonexistent. Just as the Scientologist who considers himself a Christian does not recognize the inconsistency of that position, the Christian church has not yet recognized the risk Scientology poses to its own fold.

In a rational universe two contrary religions might be false, but both cannot be true. Thus, if

the Christian worldview is true (we have shown elsewhere how this may be reasonably established on revelational-empirical grounds using the strict measure of legal criteria; see 798), then that which contradicts it cannot be true.

In the area of theology, several key issues are pondered continually and quite personally. They concern the areas of theology proper (the existence and nature of God), revealed theology (Does God exist for me?), anthropology (Who or what am I?), soteriology (Why am I here?), and thanatology (What happens when I die?).

These questions raise issues about the nature of God, man, salvation, and death. No issues are more fundamental or important. To answer these questions in error will, like a philosophical leaven, spread corruption throughout one's entire worldview. Following we will briefly compare and contrast the Scientology view with the Christian view in these four areas.

### God

As noted, Scientology is fundamentally panentheistic (2557). This contradicts the biblical teaching that there is only one sovereign and perfect Creator God from all eternity. God is immutable, without beginning or end, exists in three Persons, and is infinitely holy, just, and loving (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:10-11; Acts 5:3-4; Isaiah 61:8; Malachi 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:13; 1 John 4:8-10).

Scientology has relatively few comments about Jesus Christ; however, it does not accept the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ was the only incarnation of God and divine Savior of the world. In fact, Jesus was rather ordinary. "Neither Lord Buddha nor Jesus Christ were OTs [Operating Thetans, i.e., enlightened as to their true spiritual nature] according to the evidence. They were just a shade above clear" (2588).

### Man

Scientology teaches that a person is an immortal spirit, similar to the *atman* in Hinduism. And, as in Hinduism, a person may be considered a deity of sorts, who has forgotten he or she is divine.

The Bible rejects the idea that people are ignorant gods who need only enlightenment,\*

or self-realization. People are a creation of God, made in God's image, and their problems do not result from engrams or boredom but from sin and self-centeredness (Romans 3:10-18; Ephesians 2:1-3).

If there is one supporting pillar of Scientology upon which everything rests, it is the thetan concept. If there is no thetan, the practices of Scientology are without justification, for nearly everything of importance in Scientology is predicated upon the existence of thetans as Hubbard defines them.

In the biblical view the one eternal God (Isaiah 45:10-11) created man (body and spirit) as a finite creature (Genesis 2:7) at a specific point in time. Hence it is impossible that divine beings such as Scientology's thetans could exist. Therefore, Scientology's philosophy, techniques, solutions to problems, and final goals are based upon underlying presuppositions that are biblically incorrect. Put simply, if no thetan exists, then most of Scientology is based on error, for "almost the entirety of Scientology consists of discovery and refinements of methods whereby the Thetan can be persuaded to relinquish his self-imposed limitations" (2576:31). And, if no thetan exists, what may a rational inquirer to Scientology conclude?

### Salvation

Salvation in Scientology takes a thetan from personal ignorance and bondage to matter into Gnostic enlightenment and freedom from the MEST body and universe. One is progressively "saved" from engrams by *knowledge* (Scientology beliefs) through good works (Scientology auditing and practice) to arrive at the highest level of "operating thetan." (By the way, the cost of this ongoing sojourn easily reaches tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars.)

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that salvation is a free gift. One is redeemed from sin by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 6:47; Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 2:2). Scientology, however, clearly rejects the atonement of Jesus Christ. Scientology alleges that to believe in and trust in Christ's atonement on the cross for forgiveness of sins is to "keep man in chains."

In Hubbard's *Volunteer Minister's Handbook*, we read, "We have proven conclusively that man

is basically good—a fact which flies in the teeth of old religious beliefs that man is basically evil. . . . Man is basically good but he could not attain expression of this until now. Nobody but the individual could die for his own sins—to arrange things otherwise was to keep man in chains” (2589:348-49). To the contrary, the Scripture teaches of Jesus Christ, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Jesus Himself taught, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

#### *Death*

Scientology claims that death is endlessly repeatable through reincarnation and hence almost inconsequential, although at least potentially beneficial in that one is released from the prison of the body.

Biblically, death is a one-time event that carries either the most sublime of blessings (eternal heaven) or the most horrible of consequences (eternal hell). Death leads to an irreversible fate for both the saved and the lost. People have one lifetime only to make their peace with God (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 20:10-15).

To summarize, Scientology does not conform in basic worldview or particular theological teachings to Judeo-Christian revelation in any sense. Indeed, examined as a whole, it fundamentally rejects Christian faith. For example, Hubbard rejects Christ’s deity and mission as figments of an “unenlightened” mind. Therefore Hubbard’s philosophy “is not interested in saving man, but it can do much to prevent him from *being* ‘saved’ ” (2590:105; cf. p. 408).

We may observe that Scientology does entertain a noble goal in attempting to improve the world and man’s lot within it, whether materially or spiritually. Many practitioners are dedicated and selfless in seeking such ends. Nevertheless, each Scientologist must weigh the scales of his own conscience to determine the best manner in which to achieve such goals. If man is not a thetan but a fallen being in need of redemption, what will have been the fruit of a lifetime of work for Scientology? It would be wise for those Scientologists with a Christian background (indeed, for all Scientologists), to listen afresh to the words of Jesus:

For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26 NASB).

This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3 NASB).