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Another Look at the Church of Scientology?

By Tal Davis

Recently one of the jazz world's biggest stars passed away. For more than fifty years pianist Chick Corea performed with some of the world's top jazz bands and musicians. A winner of numerous awards, including several Grammys, Corea had a highly successful career in the recording business. So what was the secret of his success? According to his obituary, Corea credited his involvement with Scientology as the key to his creativity. Given this news, perhaps it is time for us to review the history and beliefs of one of the strangest religious movements of the 20th century: the Church of Scientology.

Most Americans are vaguely aware of Scientology because of its promotion by a number of Hollywood celebrities. Corea, Tom Cruise, John Travolta (and his late wife Kelly Preston), Kirstie Alley, Priscilla Presley, and others have sung the siren praises of Scientology for decades. That being said, from 2005 to 2009, several top ranking Scientology leaders defected from the movement accusing church leadership of the mental and physical abuse of staff members. Some former prominent celebrities have also defected. Most notable of its ex-member critics is TV actress and former star of the King of Queens, Leah Remini. She even produced a documentary series for several years on A&E network entitled: *Leah Remini - Scientology and the Aftermath*. In her show, she interviewed many ex-Scientologists about their negative experiences in and out of the bizarre cult. Many of them, especially those who served on the staff of any of the Scientology corporations, have described how they were

physically and emotionally abused by the higher ranking leaders of the church.

So what is Scientology and what should Christians think about it? Let's take another look.

What is now called the Church of Scientology was originally founded in 1954 by a then popular Science Fiction writer named L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986). Hubbard claimed that, as a young man, he searched the world for answers to life's greatest questions. Eventually, so Hubbard said, he was able to fully understand the truth about the universe, the world, and humanity. Out of these discoveries he formulated a novel system of enhanced mental functioning he called "Dianetics." In 1950, Hubbard published a best selling self-help book titled, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* wherein he made his system known to the world.

So just who was L. Ron Hubbard anyway? Lafayette Ronald Hubbard was born in Nebraska in 1911. He spent most of his childhood on his grandfather's Montana ranch while his parents served overseas in the U.S. Navy. Hubbard later stated that visits with his parents to Asia in the 1920s introduced him to Eastern philosophies and religions. In his early years, Hubbard made a living cranking out science fiction stories for Sci-fi magazines. In fact, his concept of "Dianetics," which was the basis of Scientology, was first introduced in a 1950 Science Fiction anthology magazine called *Astounding Science Fiction*.

In 1954, Hubbard incorporated the Church of Scientology to promote his weird ideas using a pseudo-religious facade. Hubbard spent most of his last years out

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of the public eye aboard his luxury yacht being waited on hand-and-foot by teen-age girls. He died in California in 1986.

Eventually, in 1993, following Hubbard's death, and after decades of legal haggling with the IRS, his "church" was granted 501(c)3 status, which provided a federal income tax exemption for donors to the "church" (i.e.: people who paid high fees for Auditing sessions [see below]). Amazingly, Hubbard's books and church have spread worldwide, with church chapters, called "Dianetics Centers," in many states and foreign countries. Note: some countries have outlawed Scientology due to fears of its extremism.

The term "Scientology" comes from Latin and Greek words literally meaning "Knowing about knowing." Hubbard created that term to describe his method of mental training. According to one of Scientology's own text books, Scientology ... "Comes from the Latin *scio*, which means 'know', and the Greek word *logos*, meaning 'the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known.' Thus, Scientology means... 'knowing about knowing.'" (Source: *What is Scientology?* p. 816)

After his death, Hubbard was succeeded as president and leader of Scientology by his top young associate David Miscavige (b. 1960). Miscavige claimed Hubbard, by dying, had ascended to higher levels of existence beyond the physical world and had left him in charge down here.

As was mentioned above, L. Ron Hubbard's most read book was *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, written in 1950. In that complex and confusing tome, he described what he saw as the

essential problems of the human race, and suggested the ultimate solution. That, of course, was his mental training process called "Dianetics." In the book Hubbard explained his method for removing stored negative memories from the mind that he called "engrams." Engrams are supposedly unconscious mental images recorded in the unconscious irrational part of the mind that have negative effects on a person's mental and physical well-being. He called that part of the mind the "reactive mind," which works on a totally stimulus-response basis. Engrams are learned from one's past lives, prenatal experience, and early childhood. These prevent a person from fully realizing their potential and enjoying a happy life using the "analytical mind," that is, the conscious rational part of the mind.

According to Hubbard, the way to rid one's mind of engrams is by a therapeutic process he called "Auditing" (from the Latin word *audire* - to hear or listen). This technique utilizes an electronic machine called an E-meter (Electro-psychometer) for detecting and eliminating engrams. An Auditor is a trained counselor who conducts the auditing sessions. Engrams are removed from the mind only by this expensive (and highly specious) process.

When a person finally has removed all his or her engrams and has enhanced his or her own reactive mind, they are said to arrive at a higher mental state called "Clear." He or she will supposedly exhibit the following mental qualities: "(1) freed from active or potential psychosomatic illness or aberration; (2) self-determined; (3) vigorous and persistent; (4) unrepressed; (5) able to perceive, recall, imagine, create, and compute at a level high above the norm; (6) stable mentally; (7) free with his emotion; (8) able to enjoy life; (9) free from accidents; (10) healthier; able to reason swiftly; and (11) able to react quickly." (from *What is Scientology*, p. 811)

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Once a person achieves basic "clear" they then will need "Advanced Upper Level" Scientology auditing to remove engrams accumulated in previous lives (Scientology affirms the Far Eastern Thought worldview concept of reincarnation). These higher degrees of therapy allow one to advance to various levels of "Operating Thetan" (OT). According to L. Ron Hubbard, "thetan" is the immortal human soul or spiritual being ("from the Greek letter *theta* the traditional letter for thought or life"). It is the true, timeless identity of the individual. Through advanced (and expensive) auditing sessions, he or she can climb up the latter to higher "OT" levels of personal control and power.

All this being said, there is one other doctrine of Scientology that must really call into question the rationality of smart people like Chick Corea. L. Ron Hubbard taught that 75 million years ago there existed an interstellar Galactic Federation of planets headed by an evil emperor named Xenu (or Xemu) (remember, Hubbard started out as a science fiction writer).

Only students in advanced OT levels of Scientology are taught the secret story about what Hubbard called "The Wall of Fire." According to that story, Xenu, then the tyrannical head of the Galactic Federation (76 planets of 178 billion people [wogs]), sent large populations to Earth (Teegeeack) where they were destroyed by H-bombs.

Thetans, sort of the disembodied spirits of those murdered beings, were captured and held on earth as "clusters" where they infect people today.

Eventually, according to the myth, Xenu was captured and is still held in an electronic cage somewhere on Earth ("The Evil Place"). Only in the advanced OT training can people hear about this ancient event and learn how to rid themselves of the thetans who are attached to them. These sessions, of course, cost enormous amounts of money, and can only be received from the Church of Scientology. Obviously, these gnostic doctrines of Hubbard are no longer secret, which must be frustrating (and probably embarrassing) to those who believe them.

It is sad that a brilliant talent like Chick Corea, along with thousands of

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other seemingly intelligent people, was lured into such a maniacal movement as Scientology. However, with courageous defectors like Leah Remini and others speaking out about the strange teachings of L. Ron Hubbard and the abusive behavior of his successors, we wonder how long the Church of Scientology can continue to entice people into its web of deceit.

As Christians, we should pray for those in bondage to this cult. We contend that L. Ron Hubbard was nothing more than a clever charlatan who managed to deceive many naïve people, many of them albeit bright and gifted. We maintain that the real solution to our problems is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is not engrams, or reactive minds, or past lives, or thetans that plague human beings, it is the presence of sin in our lives. Only through faith in Christ, who died to save us from our sins and rose again, that we can find true liberation, peace, and the assurance of eternal life.