

The Relationship Between Scientology and Other Religions

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I. INTRODUCTION

This writer is Japanese, and this paper is about the similarities and differences of the Scientology religion with other religions of the world. This paper will also take a special interest in the similarities and differences from a Japanese perspective and thus will be comparing Scientology to Japanese religions.

The term religion in Japan means to teach the origin, teach the source of the origin. That is the Japanese definition, but may not correspond to the Western definition. For this study we shall use the Japanese definition. For the purpose of Japanese law one can add that to be a religion the religious organization must also disseminate the teachings, perform religious ceremonies and train parishioners. Scientology does all these as outlined in the following pages.

It is said in a 31-syllable Japanese poem called a "Waka" that there are many paths at the foot of the mountain, but the view of the moon is the same at the peak. This is an old poem and predates Christianity's arrival in Japan. Mostly it refers to the two main religions of Japan, Shinto and Buddhism, where it was said that you end up the same no matter which sect you belonged to. The point being made was, why quarrel? But more importantly, when there are so many similarities among religions, why concentrate on differences?

The Scientology religion is relatively unknown in Japan, although many

libraries contain Scientology books written not only by the founder, L. Ron Hubbard, but also by the Church of Scientology itself. Having read 30 books on the subject, this writer feels that any person wishing to know more on the subject is well-advised to read these books.

II. WHAT IS SCIENTOLOGY?

The origins of Scientology date back to the 1930s when L. Ron Hubbard, the American who was to become the founder of Scientology, travelled the East and asked himself why man was living such a miserable life. No one had been able to answer his questions, when, as a young man, he had asked where man came from and where man was going.

In 1950, Mr. Hubbard wrote a book on a subject he called Dianetics ("through mind"), which was his early research into the mind. The book, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* was very popular and soon became a bestseller, and has sold more than 17 million copies. As the Dianetics movement grew and the research expanded from the mind into the spirit, another subject was born -- Scientology -- and the first Church was founded in 1954 in the United States. Dianetics first entered Japan shortly after that, but the first formal Scientology missionary expansion into Japan occurred in 1962, making this the actual starting point of Scientology's history in Japan. On 10 September 1962 the first official lecture on Scientology was given to a packed auditorium.

The word "Scientology" comes from the Latin *scio*, meaning "Knowing -- in the fullest sense of the word," and the Greek *logos*, which means "to study."

In the book *Scientology -- The Fundamentals of Thought*, Mr. Hubbard explains that the subject is actually descended from the roots of psychology, but that we must understand that it is not descended from current psychology, but rather the older psychology as was taught in the religions of the world before the spiritual essence of the study was removed in the last century.

Psychology means literally "the study of the spirit." Psychology of today has lost this meaning and no longer studies or recognizes the spirit as a bona fide field of study. In this sense Scientology is very different, as it does study the spirit, as most great religions of the world do.

Religions generally accept that the human spirit is related to the great "life-force" of this universe. However, the word "spirit" is difficult to define. Some would argue that the spirit is in fact the human mind. But in Scientology the term "spirit" would mean "oneself" and it means much more than just the mind. In one Japanese Shinto religion, *Seichi-no-Ie*, it is expressed as what would be translated into "the child of God." It would correspond to the Japanese words "hime" or "hiko." In Scientology, Mr. Hubbard coined the word *thetan*, from the Greek for spirit, as no other existing word could fully describe it.

The concept of coining new words to explain new concepts that have no existing words is not new to religion. In Japan, Master Kobodaishi, the founder of

Shingon (a very old and traditional, large esoteric Buddhist sect) coined many words that needed to be developed so that the religion could be practiced.

Yet at the same time there is no new word for God coined in Scientology. Though the framework of God may not be part of the Scientology study, and members may have their own ideas of what this term is or is not, the words used for it are "the Supreme Being," the "infinite," "the allness of all," "the author of the universe," and of course "God."

Unlike some other religions, Scientology has no particular dogma about the concept of God, but rather allows the person to develop his own understanding of how he fits into the universe and the nature of things. From there faith may follow. Thus Scientology students not only appear to come from all walks of life and nationalities, but from very diverse religious backgrounds. Being a member of more than one religion is very common in Japan and the East. In this tradition, some Japanese students of Scientology also do not give up their other religions, but from what this writer can understand, have used their study of Scientology to strengthen their previous religious commitment and faith in God. This is slightly similar in concept to what is practiced in the relatively new Shinto religion, Seicho-no-Ie, which also has followers coming from Buddhist, Christian and other faiths.

III. SCIENTOLOGY AND ITS INTERRELATION WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Scientology has an obvious similarity with Buddhism. So much so that Mr. Hubbard once asked the question of Buddhist leaders in Asia if it were possible that he was the Metteya who had been prophesied by Buddha. Buddha, Guatama Siddhartha, had told his followers when he was about to die that in the future a Buddha would come to complete the job he had begun, and that he was to be known as Metteya. If Mr. Hubbard is to complete the humane intentions of the great Siddhartha, only time will tell. It is not the purpose of this paper to answer the question that Mr. Hubbard raised. However, the fulfilling of prophecies is another similarity to other religions, great and small.

The first book that this writer read was Scientology - The Fundamentals of Thought. In reading this book, this writer immediately thought of how similar the contents were to Shinto religions. Specifically there is the understanding that life is but an apparency, and that the physical world is actually the apparent world, there to be seen by the senses. This is very similar to the teachings of the founder of Seicho-no-Ie, Master Masaharu Taniguchi. (Master Taniguchi was one of the four people to write down the Story Of The Universe for Holy Master Onisaburo Deguchi of Oomoto, another Shinto religion of Japan.) Both Oomoto and Seicho-no-Ie are relatively recent in Japanese history with Oomoto beginning at the end of the last century and Seicho-no-Ie beginning in the 1920s.

In Buddhism, this same idea of the "apparency of life" is expressed as "Shiki soku, Ku soku ze shiki" which means simply that anything that can be perceived with the five senses is simply nothingness or empty. The Buddhists also maintain that the universes of man are only manifestations of the mind. Of course Buddhism also has a much deeper meaning, as does Scientology.

Other explanations about life and the mind are also comparable to some Shinto beliefs, such as that the memories of experience are recorded in a film-like memory, each frame duplicating the events for the person. This again has similarities to Seicho-no-Ie. But one term in Scientology that was of great interest is the term theta. In Yui Itsu Shinto, what could be a corresponding term means "The Great Life Force of the Universe." It is also in common with Hakke Shinto, which had been in charge of religious services for the Imperial Household until the time of the Meiji Restoration. This same concept then became the basis of newer Shinto religions such as Mahikari, which boomed after the war.

The concept of a person having lived before is old and fully accepted by Eastern religions. Scientology theory and practice is based around this concept, that one is a spiritual being which Mr. Hubbard has called a thetan, and that one can recall past lives, and that as a spiritual being his actions of his past determine his situation in the present. There are more than 180,000 religious bodies in Japan, and I would expect that this concept is shared by most of them in one way or another. Of course this concept dates back not only to the time of Buddha, but also to the Veda, the source of the great Indian religions.

IV. SCIENTOLOGY PRACTICE--AUDITING

The central practice of Scientology is called auditing, from Latin audire, which means to listen. The person answering questions put to him by the auditor ("one who listens") brings about for himself a senior state of mind and spirit, and a curing of bodily psychosomatic ills. This is very much in common with some of the newer Shinto religions that come from the Yui-Itsu Shinto line which dates back 1,400 years in Japan.

Scientology thought began with Mr. Hubbard's early research in the 1930s, which is the same time the newer Shinto religions were searching for a means of applicable religious practice to heal the spirit. Auditing began in the USA in 1950, when Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health was published. In this book Mr. Hubbard outlines how one can attain the state known as Clear-- free from what is referred to as the reactive mind. It could be compared to the state of "Satori" or even "Naikan" in Buddhism. In some Shinto religions, where a person meditates on his experiences of childhood or his past lives, under a teacher's direction, to self-reflect on the way he is now. Auditing, which also can be described as a reflection on one's past, be it childhood or past lives, can also bring about the same reflection and understanding of one's current state in life.

How to conduct auditing is learned by a person who studies in Scientology study rooms called academies and course rooms. There, under the guidance of a supervisor, the student reads and practices the techniques of auditing. Auditing is the practice whereby this trained auditor has a person who is not Clear answer questions about his past. The person receiving this auditing is called the "preclear," as he is not yet Clear. As the preclear answers the questions put to him by the auditor, he experiences relief of stress, a betterment and peace of mind, and general spiritual well-being. The training time to become a proficient auditor will vary but it

can take from months to years depending on the level of proficiency and exactitude the auditor is striving to achieve.

In the Oomoto religion, the practice of "Naikan" is still practiced and rehabilitates juvenile delinquents, resulting in regional governmental commendation for the practice. Again comparable, Scientology has juvenile rehabilitation programs operating in many parts of the world. Of course Naikan and auditing have similarities, but are also fundamentally different. This is an example, however, showing two religions approaching the same problem from two different cultures and arriving at answers that have obvious similarities. With auditing, one would tell the auditor in minute detail of what he had found troubling him in life from his past, where with "Naikan" one would reflect for himself under a teacher's tutelage. The end result for both is betterment in spiritual behaviour and a resurgence of ethical conduct.

In the practice of Seicho-no-Ie, called "Sin-So-Kan," a person is trained to confront himself through his past. This also has a similarity with auditing. In both practices one has to confront his own past.

Scientology has a graded path to enlightenment which is called the Bridge to Total Freedom. The result of travelling this Bridge, by being audited and learning how to audit, is not only great enlightenment but also a spiritual beingness comparable to "Chin-Kon-Ki-Shin," the great secret of Shinto, which means "to appease the spirit of man so that he can return to a God-like state." This is very similar in concept. This has been practiced by various Shinto religions, including Hakke Shinto, which was founded in 1025 A.D.

Making people better with the natural spiritual healing arts is not a lost practice in Japanese religions, as it is for some other religions. Religions such as Seicho-no-Ie, Sekai-Kyusei-kyo, Shinto-tenkokyo, Ananai-kyo and others are all interested in practices in Japan that bring out the state of Chin-kon-Kishin. The number of followers number 20 million. Though their techniques may be different, their purposes and goals have a direct similarity to the Scientology practice of auditing and having its members move up the Bridge to Total Freedom, grade by grade.

In other major world religions, too, such a state is not without description. In Islam, there is the term "Imam Zamam" which means a person so enlightened that he can fully perceive all the seven meanings of the Holy Koran.

In the Christian confessional one also has to confront one's past. Again this is similar to Scientology, which also offers confessional procedure. A person has to look back into his past, confront another person with it -- the auditor -- and confess. The result is the same for both faiths -- a betterment of the spirit and a resurgence in life.

This brings us full circle again to the prophecy of Buddha, who predicted that one day Metteya would liberate man from what is holding him back. In Japan, the Metteya prophecy is different from those of the Pali. Here the prophecy is not so

much that a person will necessarily return, but rather that man could have a way of returning to the spiritual state as prophesied. Many religions in Japan have been waiting for such events to evolve, both Buddhist and Shinto. Scientology does have a means of raising man's spiritual ability. Japan is a country where religions place an accent on the raising of one's spiritual ability. From a Japanese point of view, Scientology is indeed a similar religion to others already here

V .CEREMONIES

Religion would not be complete without ceremonies, and Scientology has a book called Background and Ceremonies, used by ministers of Scientology Churches for funeral services, wedding services and for welcoming newborns into the world, to mention but a few of the Scientology services. In the West, Sunday services are also performed.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one cannot reach any other decision than that Scientology is a religion. It has more similarities to Japanese religions than Western religions, and for this reason it may be misunderstood in the West for not being similar to the other mainstream religions. But, nevertheless, it is an international religion, very similar to religions in Japan that have adherents numbering 20 million.

I would also like to introduce the esteemed academic religious scholar and Emeritus Fellow of Oxford University of England, Bryan Ronald Wilson. He has written a very detailed study of Scientology, and for further details on Scientology from a Western scholastic point of view, I highly recommend this study for further reading.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Fumio Sawada is the eighth holder of the secrets of Yu-itsu Shinto, the oldest religion in Japan. Yu-itsu Shinto means The Way of One God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. The first holder of the Yu-itsu Shinto secret, or Tamanoya secrets, as they can also be called, was Shoto-ku Taishi (Crown Prince of Shotoku) of 1440 years ago. The second holder of the secrets was Emperor Tenmu of 712, who also wrote Kojiki, the first written historical record of Japan. The third holder of the secrets was the founder of the Shugendo religion.

Mr. Sawada was once director of Sophis University, one of Japan's most distinguished universities. He is Chairman of the Christian Democratic Party of Japan. He has been accorded the venerated Islamic title of Hajj, having completed a pilgrimage to Mecca. He is president of the Ahlut-Bait (A.S.) Center in Japan. His eldest son is currently studying Islam in Iran, while his second son is studying in the Vatican

