

# Scientology founder

## heavenly visits

L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology has made many claims, one of which was that he has been to heaven twice. In the fourth of a series of articles, Bob McKee reports on the man, his family, his connection with the church, and some of his unusual claims.

By BOB MCKEE

"Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wanted to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion."

The above quote is taken from a meeting of writers in Newark, New Jersey, in 1949. The speaker was Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, then a successful 33-year-old science-fiction writer. The audience responded with amusement and laughter.

Several years later Hubbard was to open the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington.

In fairness to Scientologists, the much-quoted remark has been passed off as either a joke or a reference taken out of context, but whatever conclusions one may draw from the remark there can be little doubt that it has remained something of a millstone around the neck of the church.

Throughout his long and colorful career Hubbard has been prone to making occasional declarations that enhance the reputation of his church not one iota.

The method in which he conducted and laid down the foundations for the following informal christening service in 1957 could hardly have convinced skeptics that they were witnessing a church service.

Addressing himself to the babe, he introduced the parents and designated godparents to those gathered. Then, still addressing the child, he continued: "How are you? All right. Now your name is . . . You got that? Good. There you are. Did that upset you? Now, do you realize that you're a member of HASI? Pretty good, huh? All right. Now I want to introduce you to your father, this is Mr. . . . (to the parent): Come over here. (To the child): And here's your mother. And now in case you get into trouble and want to borrow some quarters, here's Mr. . . . See him? He's your Godfather. Now take a look at him.



SCIENTOLOGY FOUNDER L. RON HUBBARD

"That's right. And here's . . . in case you want some real good auditing; she's your Godmother. Got it? Now you are suitably christened. Don't worry about it, it could be worse. OK."

"Thank you very much. They'll treat you all right."

The church does perform a more traditional and formal ritual, but Hubbard's early informal style has been kept by Scientologists for austerity.

Hubbard's critics were suitably bemused when, in 1963, he claimed he had been to heaven on two occasions. In his first visit, which occurred "43,691,832,611,177 years, 344 days, 10 hours, 20 minutes and 40 seconds from 11:02½ PM Daylight Greenwich Time, May 9 1963." Heaven was complete with gates, saints and angels.

On a second journey "several hundred billion years later on the same date" he discovered heaven to be "shabby." The

pillars were scruffy and the saints and angels had vanished.

"The symbol of the crucified Christ is very apt, indeed. It's the symbol of a theta betrayed," he wrote.

Scientologists hit back at critics by saying the account was an allegory, while Hubbard's own answer to those critical of the subject was: "Disillusionment results more from own failing and lack of comprehension than failures in the subject itself."

Despite what may seem trash and ill conceived statements, Hubbard has always maintained his integrity.

Now 66 years of age, Lafayette Ron Hubbard no longer consents to interviews or directly answers criticism of his church. Instead, he has adapted a Howard Hughes type existence, living the life of a recluse aboard his roving residence "The Apollo," one of four Scientology sea