

# Accent on living

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## Scientology: Another pop psychology?

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Forgive the digression, but as a child, I had a fool-proof method for falling asleep. If I were lying wide-awake in bed, I would categorize my thoughts, imagining my mind was a room full of filing cabinets.

Into each of these files (not unlike the ones where the Mouseketeers kept their cartoons) went one worry or problem. By the time the data was transferred, I would be asleep.

The point being that I viewed my mind as something akin to a fantastic office machine. Which gives you an inkling (*just an inkling*) of what Scientology is all about.

Known for years as everything from a legitimate religion to another one of those cult-spawning California fetishes, Scientology is gaining membership, growing in popularity and becoming visible through a handful of celebrities who have embraced its tenets.

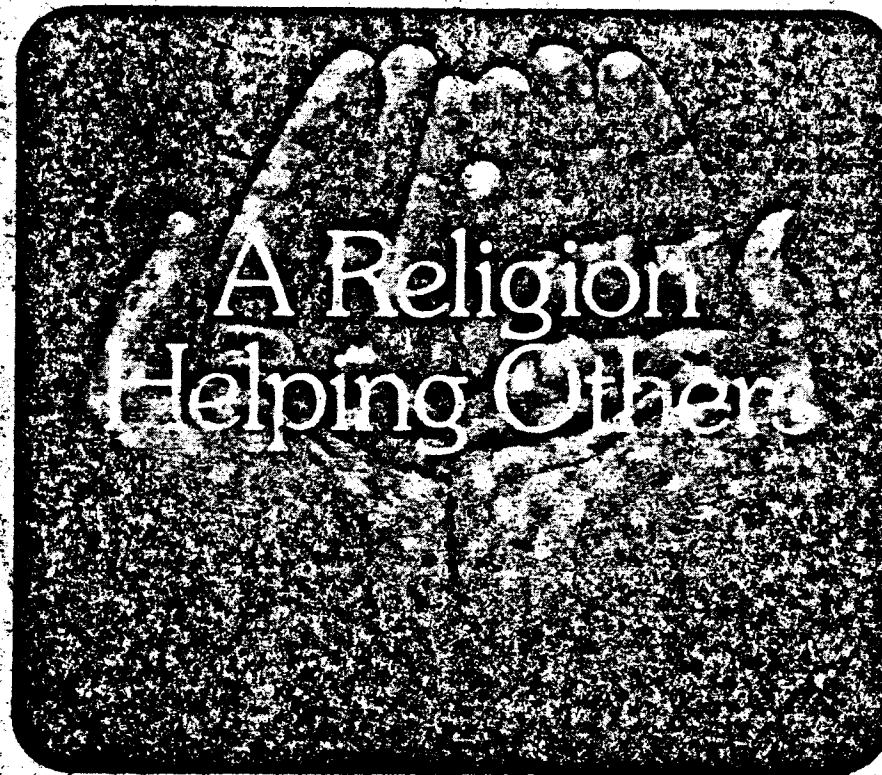
IN THE LOS Angeles church headquarters, personalities such as John Travolta, Chick Corea and Karen Black worship in the "celebrity center" where

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they can study quietly, away from inquisitive eyes of others.

The church claims 4 million members belonging to missions and churches in every free country on earth. In Ohio, there are missions in Columbus, Cincinnati, Tole-

### SCIENTOLOGY



TITLE PAGE from a Scientology booklet

do, Dayton and in Cleveland Heights where the following interview took place.

Scientology is the brainchild of L. Ron Hubbard, an explorer, author, geologist and philosopher who began, in the 1930s, a series of inquiries into an age-old question: What makes man tick?

Hubbard wanted to know and consulted every source imaginable. As the well-traveled son of a U.S. Navy commander, he spent years in Asia familiarizing himself with Eastern religions.

HE CONSULTED whatever shaman a particular society had to offer — from magicians to psychiatrists.

Sanford Block, the church's minister for public affairs in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, says Hubbard discovered validity in all approaches to life, but satisfaction in none.

"You know, you could sit on a mountain for just so long. What bearing would that have on solving men's problems?" he said.

Dressed in clerical garb, Block looks the role of a young priest — longish brown hair and easy style. He explains the route Hubbard took to discovering Dianetics, the principles on which Scientology is based.

"HE REDUCED everything to an absolute basic, which is the urge, or command, to survive. He didn't disallow the possibility of a spiritual being, but was only interested in what works; he wanted to know what the mechanics of the machine (the mind) were," Block said.

He outlined three brain functions Hubbard believes in: *the analytical mind*, used constantly in decision making; *the schematic mind* which controls involuntary functions like the beating of the heart; and *the reactive mind*, Hubbard's novel concept in the brain's function.

## Just another pop psychology?

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Dianetics deals with the reactive mind and attempts, through practices developed by Hubbard, to clear the mind of those blocks. To this point, Scientology sounds like a dozen other pop psychology therapies — EST, BEST, I'm OK, You're OK. But Hubbard took it one step further.

HE WROTE THE 1950s bestseller "Dianetics, The Modern Science of Mental Health" and discovered groups around the country were forming to practice his techniques in bringing the troubles of the reactive mind to the analytical mind — thereby clearing a person's view of incidents.

As he continued his studies, delving deeper into man's thought processes, Hubbard concluded "that he was no longer dealing with man as a hunk of flesh, as the pinnacle of homo sapiens on the genetic line. He was dealing with a spiritual being," Block said.

"IT'S NOT A big belief trip. If you find something in Scientology that you like, then apply it. If it works, fine. If not, then it's not true for you," he said.

Block takes another drag on a nonfiltered Camel cigarette and shares his introduction to Scientology.

He dropped engineering studies in college because he wanted a profession helping people, and turned to psychology.

"I had studied art and religion, and I thought psychology was where it was at. But I didn't find it there. I wasn't a Satre-ite or an existentialist. Then a friend gave me a copy of "Dianetics" and I started reading it and thinking 'Is this real?'"

"SO I STARTED applying it on my own and found I had a better outlook on life. I started looking at things more rationally," he said.

"LRH (Block uses Hubbard's initials when speaking about him) saved me a lot of work. Now I knew there was an outlet, and a profession if I wanted it."

So Block packed his bags for New York City where he could study at a Dianetics center. Running samples in the Big Apple's garment district, he lived in the YMCA and started working in the Scientologist church, later realizing he wanted a career in the ministry.

"I was always interested in religion, but no one offers it to you as a viable profession. Your high school counselor never mentions it; thanks to psychology, everyone thinks that somebody who is religious is crazy."

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BLOCK'S DESIRE to help people was fulfilled through the church. "Scientology fits me. It was my practice, now it's my livelihood," he said. But, Block points out, his view of God remains Judaic.

Which may account for the ease of embracing Scientology as a religious philosophy. Scientology adheres to no structured religious view. A person may practice Scientology and remain a Christian, Catholic, Jew or Moslem.

The church holds Sunday services, starting usually with the Scientology creed and perhaps a prayer, Block said. The creed reads, in part:

*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 one another*

*To destroy or enslave another's soul*

*To destroy or reduce the survival of one's companions or one's group*

PARISHIONERS MAY follow with a sermon or group discussion about spiritual life. Some congregations pass a plate for donations at services; others agree to tithe or pay a monthly fee as church members. One-year enrollment in the church costs \$75.

Additionally, the Church of Scientology offers a series of courses using dianetic theories. After visiting the Cleveland Heights mission, I received in the mail a bright red and white flier for one of the church's courses.

"ARE YOU PLAGUED BY PROBLEMS OF THE PAST? STOP! LIVING IN THE PAST. START! LIVING YOUR LIFE NOW," it read. Below the pitch for a new co-audit course was a quote from a former student. "...I had thought I knew before, but now I am sure I KNOW. I felt fantastic, like I was floating in the air, happy, giddy, awed, etc. I believe it was the most wonderful feeling I've ever had in this lifetime...What a way to get going!"

The cost is \$4 a night; \$15 for four evenings. The church offers an interpersonal communications course

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for \$30 and a number of other courses, up to private counseling which runs \$130 an hour.

"OK, YOU CAN pay a psychoanalyst \$50 an hour every week for 20 years, and maybe you get no benefits. Ideally, we want to see students learn to audit each other. Applying the principles and seeing them work changes your whole viewpoint when you see someone feeling better," Block said. Like any other therapy, "some people can come in for 50 hours of auditing, and it won't help them a bit. Everyone progresses at his own rate. I'm not saying you'll become a Scientology clear (the Scientologist's optimum individual) in 25 hours; there is no set standard.

"You could audit 15, 20, 50 hours — it depends on a person's awareness level," Block said.

It's a somewhat unusual approach, but the church aims to help those "who deserve to be helped. We're talking about the able people; the guy who gets up at 7 a.m., helps get the kids ready for school, works 9-5 and helps at night with the homework. For Scientology to be valuable, you have to exchange with someone who deserves to be exchanged with.

"SOME GUY WHO'S on welfare, who's living off society, wouldn't get anything out of it," Block said. But the church doesn't turn its back on indigents.

