

# Xemu may sound wild, but so do other beliefs

## The Driver's Seat

By Bob Driver



The Church of Scientology in Los Angeles is angry because a judge allowed outsiders to read about some of the remarkable lore that the Scientologists supposedly believe in.

An Associated Press report says the church teaches that 75 million years ago Earth was called Teegeeach. It was one of 90 planets ruled by Xemu, who was not a nice guy. He set off thermonuclear bombs to reduce the population, and implanted the seeds of aberrant behavior in the spirits of certain persons so that future generations of mankind would be affected.

Heber T. Jentzsch, the Scientologists' president, said that news accounts of these supposed teachings have been distorted.

It wouldn't be hard to do. When you're dealing with 75-million-year time frames, and rulers named Xemu who go around setting off H-bombs, it's easy for a careless reporter to stretch the truth or mangle a fact or two.

But Jentzsch shouldn't get upset. Most religions (if Scientology is indeed a religion, which many people doubt) are subject to having wild tales told about them.

In fact, many religions contribute to this cosmic science-fiction by originating some fairly outlandish official versions of just how they (the religions) got started.

These far-out tales are compounded by the events that followed, and by the distinctive (shall we say?) people who spread the religion.

Martin Luther, for example, threw an ink pot at the devil. Or so the story goes.

Imagine what would happen to the average Clearwater clergyperson who stood before his or her congregation next weekend and announced, "I saw the devil in my study last night, and chucked an ink pot at him." There would be immediate questions in the minds of the

worshippers. Such as, "Did you hit him? Where did you get the ink pot? Are you off your rocker?"

One of the world's major religions tells of an entire sea opening up to let some deserving people make a getaway from their enemies. There is also an account of food falling from heaven, and bushes catching on fire and speaking out loud. Then we have sinners being turned into pillars of salt, and a mortal man bringing down a temple just by pushing against a couple of supporting columns. Stuff like that.

Many religions have two far-fetched ideas in common. (A) The religion's founder was born of a virgin, and (B) the founder died and then became alive again.

For people to pay much attention to a new religion, it must have a mind-boggling origin and history. Otherwise, it will be ignored.

I can't think of a single faith, church, cult or denomination that was founded by an average, run-of-the-mill person.

Think what would happen, for instance, if the following ad appeared in every newspaper in the nation:

"C.Z. Frammerstone, a retired accountant, invites you to join his new religion. Mr. Frammerstone is a low-key, reasonable fellow who belongs to several service clubs and collects Hummels. His religion, called Instant Marvelousism, allows you to appreciate the ordinary things of life. A Marvelousist is able to look at an old inner tube, see its innate glory and say, 'Marvelous.' That's about all there is to say about Mr. Frammerstone and Marvelousism."

Do you think this new religion would sell? I doubt it.

To conclude: Heber Jentzsch should not be disturbed if the judge let some Scientology secrets out of the bag, or if reporters don't get every last detail exactly right.

And members of other faiths should not snicker at the story of Xemu and his 90 planets. No matter what religion we join, we may be asked to believe some ideas and stories that in any other context would defy all good sense.

Except for the dull, therefore-doomed church of Marvelousism.