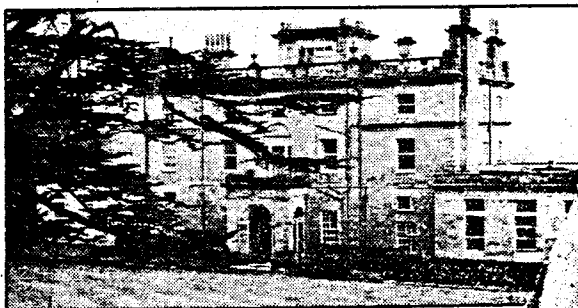


MESSIAH AT THE MANOR

Science grew out of the ashes of L Ron Hubbard's 'new science' of Dianetics, which enjoyed a brief vogue in the America of the 1950s then faded to bring its founder close to bankruptcy. In this second extract from the book the Church of Scientology tried to ban, RUSSELL MILLER describes the bizarre, science-fiction basis of the new, highly profitable religion and Hubbard's self-appointed mission to 'save the world'



Ron Hubbard (left) rewrote the theory of evolution to provide the justification for his new religion, Scientology. It began as a 'science of certainty', but Hubbard turned it into a religious cult in order to gain tax advantages from its vast income. He set up his headquarters at Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead, where he ran Scientology courses (far left) and insisted that all staff were 'audited' on his E-meter to identify potential dissidents

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L RON HUBBARD had often said: "If a man really wanted to make a million dollars, the best way to do it would be to start a religion." In 1954 he followed his own advice by founding the Church of Scientology.

The concept of Scientology had grown out of the financial fiasco of Hubbard's Dianetics. He said that the difference between Scientology and Dianetics was that whereas the latter addressed the body, Scientology addressed the soul. With his accustomed bombast, Hubbard claimed that he had "come across incontrovertible, scientifically-validated evidence of the existence of the human soul".

To underpin his new science, Hubbard created an entire cosmology, the essence of which was that the true self of an individual was an immortal, omniscient and omnipotent entity called a "thetan". In existence before the beginning of time, thetans picked up and

discarded millions of bodies over trillions of years. They concocted the universe for their own amusement but in the process became so enmeshed in it that they came to believe they were nothing more than the bodies they inhabited.

The aim of Scientology was to restore the thetan's original capacities once again of an "operating thetan" or "OT". It was an exalted state not yet known on earth. Hubbard wrote: "Neither Lord Buddha nor Jesus Christ were OTs according to the evidence. They were just a shade above Clear."

To support his theory, Hubbard provided evidence of "past lives", which were a prominent feature of Dianetic auditing. Sessions revealed accounts of space travel and adventures on other planets very similar to those found in Amazing Science Fiction magazine, to which the founder of Scientology had so recently been contributing.

One report described how a pre-clear had arrived on a planet 74,000 years ago and battled "black magic operators" who were using electronics for evil purposes: "He now goes to another planet by spaceship. A deception is accomplished by hypnosis and pleasure implants (rather like opium in their effects) whereby he is deceived into a love affair with a robot decked out as a beautiful red-haired girl..."

Past lives were confirmed by the E-meter, whose flickering needle basically measured the changes in electrical conductivity of the skin that occur at moments of even quite slight excitement or emotional stress. It proved to be such a useful auditing tool that it would eventually become invested with an almost mystical power to reveal an individual's innermost thoughts. It also provided a useful source of income, for every self-respecting Scientologist wanted to have his own E-meter and the only place to buy them was from the Hubbard Association of Scientologists.

To establish the foundations of Scientology Hubbard produced a book entitled *The History of Man*, described as "a cold-blooded and factual account of your last sixty trillion years". In a narrative style that wobbled between schoolboy fiction and a pseudo-scientific medical paper, he explained that the human body was occupied by both a thetan and a "genetic entity", a sort of low-grade soul.

Much of the book was a reworking of the theory of evolution, starting with "an atom, complete with electronic rings", after which came cosmic impact producing a "photon converter", the first single-cell creature, then seaweed, jellyfish and the clam.

After the clam came the "Weeper" or the "Boohoo", a mollusc that rolled in the surf for a million years, pumping seawater out of its shell as it breathed. "The inability of a pre-clear to cry," Hubbard explained, "is partly a hang-up in the Weeper. He is about to be hit by a wave, has his eyes full of sand or is frightened about opening his shell because he may be hit." Fear of falling also had its origins in Weepers, which were frequently dropped by predatory birds.

The book drifted into pure science fiction when Hubbard came to the point of explaining how thetans moved from body to body: they were obliged to report to a between-lives "implant station" where they were implanted into a variety of control phases while waiting to pick up another body. Hubbard revealed that most implant stations were on Mars, though there was a "Martian implant station somewhere in the Pyrenees".

TURNING Scientology into a religion made sense financially, for there were substantial tax concessions available to chu-

rchers, and it made sense pragmatically because Hubbard was convinced that as a religion Scientology would be less vulnerable to attack by the enemies he was convinced were constantly trying to encircle him.

Churches of Scientology were incorporated in the United States in 1954 and Hubbard urged franchise holders throughout the country to convert their operations into independent churches. Executives of the Hubbard Association of Scientologists International henceforth described themselves as "ministers" and some even took to wearing clerical collars and using the prefix Reverend.

The increasing success of Scientology prompted agencies such as the CIA and the FBI to keep a close eye on Hubbard. The CIA file could do no more than chronicle a multitude of vague suspicions and the FBI monitored his activities which were believed to be anti-American. By 1959 Hubbard had made enough money to buy the Maharajah of Jaipur's estate at East Grinstead, Sussex, where he decided to establish the world headquarters of Scientology.

The people of East Grinstead were not aware of this when Hubbard moved into Saint Hill Manor. He diverted attention away from his real purpose by conducting a series of horticultural experiments, describing himself as a "nuclear scientist". His demonstration, by means of an E-meter, that plants could feel pain soon had television and newspaper reporters beating a path to his door.

THE growing numbers of Scientologists around the world could have been forgiven for wondering what their leader was up to, but an explanation was soon forthcoming. The purpose of Ron's experiments, they were told, was to "reform the world's food supply". He had already produced "ever-bearing tomato plants and sweetcorn plants".

In October 1959 Hubbard, who had given himself the title of "Dr", unveiled yet another of his interests. Learning that East Grinstead had been unable to fill a vacancy for a road

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safety organiser, he volunteered for the job. As he explained to the East Grinstead Road Safety Committee, he was anxious to make a contribution to the community and he felt that the experience he had gained serving on "numerous" road safety committees in the United States could be put to good use.

He gave an interesting talk on road safety campaigns in the United States, put forward many ideas on how to reduce accidents locally, confidently answered questions and was unanimously elected as the new road safety organiser.

IN MARCH 1960 the gentle burghers of East Grinstead learned a little more about their road safety organiser when he published a book entitled *Have You Lived Before This Life?* in which were described a number of past lives revealed during auditing. One case history concerned a previous existence as a fish, another as a walrus, while a third had witnessed the destruction of Pompeii in AD79 and a fourth had been a "very happy being who strayed to the planet Nostra 23,064,000,000 years ago".

Hubbard's insistence that everyone who worked for him be interrogated on the E-meter was part of routine security checking he deemed necessary to identify potential trouble-makers, dissidents and spies.

There had been a rumpus at Saint Hill Manor when Ron ordered all the staff to be checked out on an E-meter. Three office staff and five of the domestic staff refused. Hubbard's third wife, Mary Sue, thought they evidently had something to hide.

No one in Scientology now doubted the capacity of the E-meter to expose visceral emotions and ever more elaborate "sec-checks" would become a common feature of life in the movement — evidence of Hubbard's persistent paranoia about his enemies, both those that existed in reality and those that thronged his imagination.

But despite the not unreasonable reluctance of some of the servants at the manor to be interviewed about their private lives while grasping tin cans attached to a mysterious electric machine, the Hubbards settled in comfortably. Visitors to Saint Hill would have observed little amiss with the nice American family who had taken up residence. Certainly no one would have guessed that Hubbard possessed the dubious distinction of being probably the only owner of an English country house under the continuous surveillance of the FBI.

The frequently intemperate bulletins and police letters that flowed from Saint Hill for distribution to Scientologists around the world were bound to attract the attention of the FBI. On April 24, 1960, for example, Hubbard issued a bulletin to American franchise holders asking them to do everything in their power to deny the presidency to "a person named Richard M Nixon".

In June that year, Hubbard promulgated the "Special Zone Plan" in which he explained how Scientologists could exert an influence in politics. "Don't bother to get elected," he wrote. "Get a job on the secretarial staff or the bodyguard." Positioned close to the seat of power, Scientology would be advantageously situated to transform an organisation.

Two months later, he announced the formation of a new Department of Government Affairs, necessary because of the time senior Scientology executives were having to devote to governmental affairs, as governments round the world disintegrated under the threat of atomic war and communism.

The department never existed other than as a "policy letter", but then much of Hubbard's private world only existed on paper. In bulletins

and policy letters replete with the trappings of bureaucratic red tape — colour-coded distribution lists, elaborate references, innumerable abbreviations — Scientology was flourishing as an international organisation of enormous influence waiting in the wings to save the universe from the combined perils of communism, nuclear weapons and its own folly.

Laid out and printed like official government papers, these documents conferred dry authority on content which, frequently, would not have withstood too close scrutiny. But of course no Scientologist would question the literal truth of anything Hubbard wrote, no matter how improbable. If Ron said it was so, it was so.

HUBBARD'S promotion of Saint Hill as the Mecca of Scientology resulted in hun-

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dreds of young Americans making their way to East Grinstead. Members of the local council expressed some concern since the manor was restricted by planning regulations to private residential use. But such was "Dr" Hubbard's reputation that they resolved to do no more than urge him to apply for planning permission to use the manor for office and research purposes.

He responded by slapping in a planning application to build a 75-room administration centre in the grounds of the manor and circulating a "Report to the Community" appealing for support.

In the report, Hubbard revealed to the people of East Grinstead that as a result of his experiments on plants and "living energies" he was able to reduce the physiological age of an individual by as much as 20 years and increase the average life span by as much as 25%.

As Hubbard lingered at the manor, his proclamations became increasingly bizarre. In May 1963 he revealed that he had twice visited heaven, 43 trillion and 42 trillion years earlier. In a four-page bulletin dated May 11, AD 13 (meaning "After Dianetics"), he claimed the first visit had taken place 43,891,832,611,177 years, 344 days, 10 hours, 20 minutes and 40 seconds from 10.02pm Daylight Greenwich Mean Time May 9, 1963.

Nitpickers might have pointed out that Daylight Greenwich Mean Time was a term unknown in horology and that, in any case, at 10.02pm on a May evening in Britain it would be dark, but this was a trifling matter compared with what was to come.

The first surprise was that heaven was not a floating island in the sky as everyone imagined, but simply a high place in the mountains of an unnamed planet. Visitors first arrived in a "town" comprising a trolley bus, some building fronts, sidewalks, train tracks, a

boarding house, a bistro in a basement and a bank building.

The bank was a key point of interest. Inside, to the left of the door, was a counter and directly opposite was a flight of marble stairs leading to the Pearly Gates!

On his second visit to heaven, a trillion years later, Hubbard noted marked changes: "The place is shabby. The vegetation is gone. The pillars are scruffy . . . A sign on one side (the left as you 'enter') says 'this is Heaven'. The right has a sign 'Hell' with an arrow and inside the grounds one can see the excavations like archeological diggings with raw terraces, that lead to 'Hell' . . ."

Hubbard's visits to heaven were to become something of an embarrassment to the Church of Scientology in future years and it would strive to explain that he intended his description to be allegory. But Hubbard himself attached a note to the bulletin seeming to deny this. It was, he said, "based on over a thousand hours of research auditing . . . It is scientific research and not in any way based upon the mere opinion of the researcher."

Hubbard had visited not only heaven, but also Australia, having convinced himself that Scientology could help the Australian Labour party to win the next election. This, he believed, would create a favourable climate for the development of the church.

But the Australians were for the most part hostile towards Scientology. In 1965 an Australian board of inquiry sat for 160 days, heard evidence from 151 witnesses and then savagely condemned Scientology.

"There are some features of Scientology which are so ludicrous that there may be a tendency to regard Scientology as silly and its practitioners as harmless cranks. To do so would be gravely to misunderstand the tenor of the board's conclusions . . . Scientology is evil; its techniques evil; its practice a serious threat to the

community, medically, morally and socially; and its adherents sadly deluded and often mentally ill."

In many cases, the report continued, mental derangement and a loss of critical faculties resulted from Scientology processing, which tended to produce subservience amounting almost to mental enslavement. As for L Ron Hubbard, the report suggested that his sanity was to be "gravely doubted".

Hubbard responded with the procedure to be followed if there were further official inquiries. The first step was to identify the antagonists, the next to investigate them "for felonies or worse" and then start feeding "lurid blood sex crime actual evidence on the attackers" to the press.

IN February 1966 Lord Balniel, then chairman of the National Association for Mental Health in Britain, asked the minister of health to initiate an inquiry into Scientology in Britain.

Hubbard issued an instruction from Saint Hill Manor: "Get a detective on that Lord's past to unearth the titbits. They're there." He then set up a "Public Investigation Section" to be staffed by professional detectives. The first investigator hired was told to find at least one bad mark ("a murder, an assault, or a rape") on every psychiatrist in Britain, starting with Lord Balniel. Unfortunately, the detective promptly sold his story to a Sunday newspaper, creating more unfavourable publicity for Scientology.

Trouble was also brewing in the United States, where the Internal Revenue Service was challenging the Church of Scientology's tax-exempt status. In Britain there was a rash of hysterical headlines when the police found a girl wandering the streets of East Grinstead in a distressed condition in the early hours of the morning. It transpired that she was a schizophrenic who had been institutionalised before being recruited as a Scientologist.

Soon senior Scientologists were arriving from the United States to take part in a top-secret project under Ron's personal direction. They could sometimes be seen scrambling in and out of a rubber dinghy on the lake at the manor or poring over navigational charts in a classroom. Some evenings they met behind closed doors in the garage and it was said that they spent their time practising tying knots.

By December 1967 it was known that they were involved in something called the "Sea Project". But no one could imagine what it was.

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**NEXT WEEK:
PRIVATE NAVY**