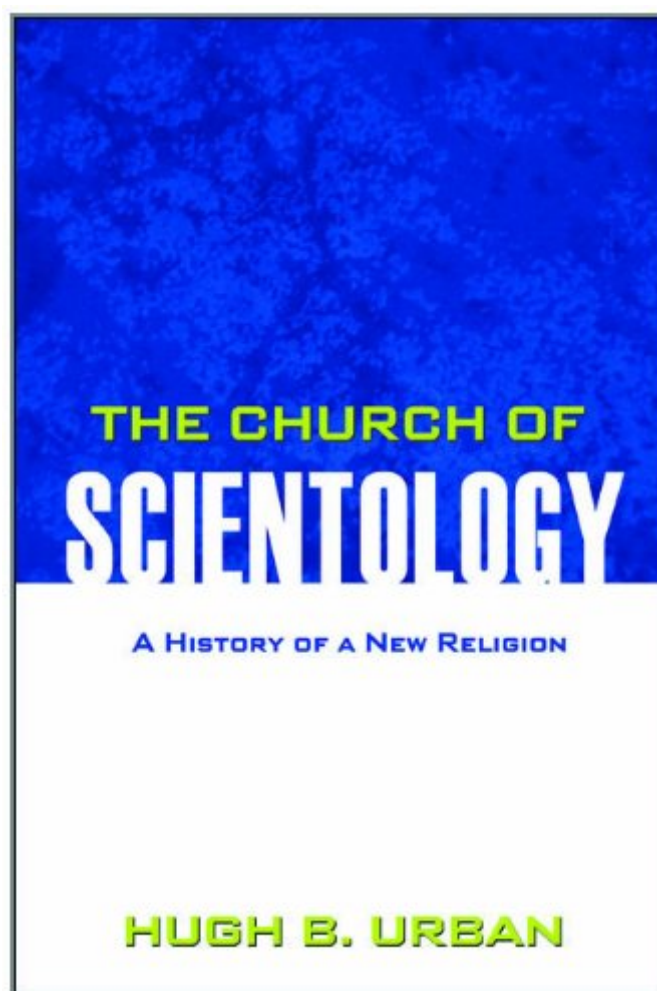


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The Church Of Scientology: A History Of A New Religion



Synopsis

Scientology is one of the wealthiest and most powerful new religions to emerge in the past century. To its detractors, L. Ron Hubbard's space-age mysticism is a moneymaking scam and sinister brainwashing cult. But to its adherents, it is humanity's brightest hope. Few religious movements have been subject to public scrutiny like Scientology, yet much of what is written about the church is sensationalist and inaccurate. Here for the first time is the story of Scientology's protracted and turbulent journey to recognition as a religion in the postwar American landscape. Hugh Urban tells the real story of Scientology from its cold war-era beginnings in the 1950s to its prominence today as the religion of Hollywood's celebrity elite. Urban paints a vivid portrait of Hubbard, the enigmatic founder who once commanded his own private fleet and an intelligence apparatus rivaling that of the U.S. government. One FBI agent described him as "a mental case," but to his followers he is the man who "solved the riddle of the human mind." Urban details Scientology's decades-long war with the IRS, which ended with the church winning tax-exempt status as a religion; the rancorous cult wars of the 1970s and 1980s; as well as the latest challenges confronting Scientology, from attacks by the Internet group Anonymous to the church's efforts to suppress the online dissemination of its esoteric teachings. The Church of Scientology demonstrates how Scientology has reflected the broader anxieties and obsessions of postwar America, and raises profound questions about how religion is defined and who gets to define it.

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Customer Reviews

What I enjoyed most about this book is that it is not just a book on Scientology, but on religion and its role in the modern world. I am sure there are many on either side of the Scientology fence, the same fence that I have been straddling for some time now, who either don't want to read about "those crazy Scientologists" or don't want to read another attack on the church. I can assure both of these prospective readers that this work is neither. You may get a feeling one way or another (and back and forth) as you progress through the book, but that is what makes the case of Scientology so damn interesting. The book is primarily about the definition of religion. By "definition of religion" Urban goes beyond the question of "What is Religion?" and into the causes and effects of that definition: who makes it and what are the consequences. Scientology has raised many important questions about the roles of religious freedom and privacy that are discussed in detail throughout this book, along with many others that have left me sitting here, grappling with my own thoughts and feelings on religion, thoughts and feelings that I thought were cemented through my previous studies and experiences. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning the history of Scientology, but more so to those intrigued by the intersection of religion, politics, and privacy. I look forward to follow up works by this author as well as others, grappling some of the increasingly important questions raised in these pages.

An excellent introduction to Scientology. Urban does not judge the movement, but rather uses it to ask the question "what is religion?". Since that question has never been adequately answered, using a new religious movement as a test case is an effective method. The reader will learn much about the history and background of Scientology, but the conclusions s/he draws are left to the reader.

"The Church of Scientology: a History of a New Religion" was well-written and researched. As I read it, I had an awareness that the author was afraid of this litigious religion, so not saying what he really wanted to say. In my opinion, Scientology has a lot of weird beliefs (like many religions), but it's their paranoia and secrecy that makes the rest of us not respect them. Thank you Hugh Urban for writing this attempt at full-disclosure.

If you think that Tom Cruise is crazy and you want to know more about the mysterious Church of Scientology this book is for you. This was a required text for a class of mine but it was one of the best academic texts that I have read due to the authors arrangement of many of the controversial topics which surround the it.

Thoroughly enjoyed this book. I have read several very good books on Scientology that employed a more "journalistic" approach (which tends to be a bit more biased), but this was a refreshingly straightforward, academic handling of the subject matter. The material really speaks for itself; at this point, the "Church" of Scientology practically seems to be begging for bias.

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