

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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## Episode #170

# A Brief History of Scientology

## 25th Jun, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about Scientology, the controversial belief system founded by a science fiction writer that, to its followers, is a [compelling](#)<sup>1</sup> way of understanding the world and connecting with your inner self, and to its critics is a dangerous [cult](#)<sup>2</sup>.

[00:00:42] This is part two of a mini-series. Part one was on Mormonism, another religion that has been labelled a dangerous [cult](#), and in part three we are going to come

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<sup>1</sup> very interesting and exciting

<sup>2</sup> a closed, strange group of people that works in secret ways



back and look at Scientology and Mormonism together, and discuss what questions they [raise](#)<sup>3</sup> about religion, and what makes us believe anything.

[00:01:03] Before we get right into today's episode, I want to remind you that you can become a member of Leonardo English and follow along with the subtitles, the transcript and its key vocabulary over on the website, which is [leonardoenglish.com](http://leonardoenglish.com).

[00:01:19] Membership of Leonardo English gives you access to all of our learning materials, all of our bonus episodes, so that's more than 170 different episodes now, including part one and part three of this mini-series, as well as two new ones every week, plus access to our awesome private community where we do live events, challenges, and much, much more.

[00:01:44] Our community now has members from over 50 countries, and it's my mission to make it the most interesting place for curious people like you to improve their English.

[00:01:55] So, if that is of interest - and I can't see a reason why it wouldn't be - then the place to go to is [leonardoenglish.com](http://leonardoenglish.com).

[00:02:05] OK then, Scientology.

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<sup>3</sup> bring up, present



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:02:09] The story of scientology is [inseparable](#)<sup>4</sup> from the story of its [iconic](#)<sup>5</sup> but [controversial](#)<sup>6</sup> founder, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, otherwise known as L.Ron Hubbard.

[00:02:21] Now, I should start by saying that there isn't universal agreement about the life of L.Ron Hubbard, and one of the criticisms of Scientology is that his achievements have been [exaggerated](#)<sup>7</sup> by the church to make him seem far more impressive than he actually was.

[00:02:41] Naturally, where there are disagreements I'll point these out, but it is hard to deny that the life of L.Ron Hubbard was varied and full of excitements of different kinds.

[00:02:54] He was born in 1911 in Nebraska, in the US midwest.

[00:03:01] As a young boy he didn't seem to [excel](#)<sup>8</sup> at anything in particular, he wasn't good at anything in particular, and he failed at his first attempt to get a place in the US Navy.

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<sup>4</sup> unable to be treated separately

<sup>5</sup> very famous for a particular thing

<sup>6</sup> causing disagreement or discussion

<sup>7</sup> presented as more important than they were

<sup>8</sup> be very good



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:03:14] He won a place to study civil engineering at George Washington University, and would later [claim](#)<sup>9</sup> that he was [on track](#)<sup>10</sup> to become a nuclear physicist.

[00:03:26] But his university records suggest otherwise; he received poor grades, and wasn't considered to be a talented student [by any means](#)<sup>11</sup>.

[00:03:37] But he had discovered another talent completely [unrelated](#)<sup>12</sup> to engineering.

[00:03:43] Writing fiction.

[00:03:45] In the 1930s he would become a [prolific](#)<sup>13</sup> writer, and although his favoured [genre](#)<sup>14</sup> was science fiction, he would write almost anything: adventure fiction, romance novels, travel stories, anything that his editors requested.

[00:04:03] He got married in 1933, and had a daughter a year later.

[00:04:08] When World War II broke out, he joined the US navy, and was given the [rank](#)<sup>15</sup> of a junior officer.

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<sup>9</sup> say that something is a fact

<sup>10</sup> following a course that would make him succeed

<sup>11</sup> in any way

<sup>12</sup> having no connection with

<sup>13</sup> producing a great number of writings

<sup>14</sup> a style or theme of literature

<sup>15</sup> a position in the army



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:04:16] Although the official Scientology story of L. Ron's time in the navy is one of a [glorious<sup>16</sup>](#), brave navy officer, there are several other accounts that described an [overly<sup>17</sup>](#) confident officer who wasn't [suited<sup>18</sup>](#) for military [duty<sup>19</sup>](#).

[00:04:34] This all [culminated<sup>20</sup>](#) when the ship that L.Ron was commanding bombed an island that was actually part of Mexico, an [ally<sup>21</sup>](#) of the US, and the young L.Ron was [dismissed<sup>22</sup>](#) from active military duty, he was in effect [sacked<sup>23</sup>](#) as a commanding officer.

[00:04:54] After this he complained of a great number of illnesses - stomach pain, headaches, shoulder pain - and he was sent to hospital.

[00:05:04] He was kept there for three months, and this will later prove to be an important part of the L.Ron Hubbard [mythology<sup>24</sup>](#), and the story of Scientology.

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<sup>16</sup> deserving great admiration and honour

<sup>17</sup> too, very

<sup>18</sup> right, appropriate

<sup>19</sup> responsibility or service

<sup>20</sup> reached a decisive point

<sup>21</sup> a country that has officially agreed to help and cooperate with another

<sup>22</sup> removed from office

<sup>23</sup> removed from employment, fired

<sup>24</sup> the collection of things said about something



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:05:16] After the war was over, and L.Ron Hubbard returned to civilian life, he was at a point of loss.

[00:05:23] He was reportedly **abandoned**<sup>25</sup> by his family and friends, his marriage had **collapsed**<sup>26</sup>, and he was suffering greatly from a health point of view.

[00:05:34] He moved to Los Angeles, continued his science fiction writing, but started to develop a system of self-help, which he would test on anyone who would be **amenable**<sup>27</sup> to it.

[00:05:48] His first, and most famous patient was himself.

[00:05:51] He would later claim that this self-help system **cured**<sup>28</sup> him of all of his illnesses, both physical and mental.

[00:06:01] By this time L.Ron had become particularly interested in psychiatry, but was a **sceptic**<sup>29</sup> of traditional psychiatric treatments.

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<sup>25</sup> left alone

<sup>26</sup> failed completely

<sup>27</sup> willing to accept it

<sup>28</sup> made him healthy

<sup>29</sup> being doubtful and questioning accepted opinions



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:06:11] Instead, he **sought**<sup>30</sup> to create his own system, a new kind of psychotherapy that claimed to **cure**<sup>31</sup> people of all sorts of illnesses.

[00:06:23] This system, which was called Dianetics and I'll explain properly in a minute, is at the heart of Scientology.

[00:06:32] The system was **codified**<sup>32</sup>, it was set out, in a book called "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health".

[00:06:41] The book was an almost instant commercial success, selling 4,000 copies in a week in its first few months on sale, and has grown to become the **canonical**<sup>33</sup> text, the most important text, in the religion that was to follow.

[00:06:58] Although it had an **authoritative**<sup>34</sup> and **seemingly**<sup>35</sup> medical title [it was "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health"], it was poorly received by medical health professionals because, well, it wasn't based on real science at all.

[00:07:15] It was based on L.Ron Hubbard's personal experience, not based on scientific fact or study.

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<sup>30</sup> attempted, tried

<sup>31</sup> make them healthy

<sup>32</sup> arranged according to a system

<sup>33</sup> most important and being the basis of something

<sup>34</sup> confident and reliable

<sup>35</sup> appearing to be



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:07:23] Indeed, to quote some reviews of it, The American Psychological Association said that Hubbard's claims were "not supported by [empirical](#)<sup>36</sup> evidence", Scientific American said that Hubbard's book contained "more promises and less evidence per page than any publication since the invention of printing", and The New Republic called it a "[bold](#)<sup>37</sup> and [immodest](#)<sup>38</sup> mixture of complete [nonsense](#)<sup>39</sup> and perfectly reasonable common sense, taken from long [acknowledged](#)<sup>40</sup> [findings](#)<sup>41</sup> and [disguised](#)<sup>42</sup> and [distorted](#)<sup>43</sup> by a crazy, newly invented terminology".

[00:08:01] So, one could summarise these reviews as "the book was a [load](#)<sup>44</sup> of made up rubbish".

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<sup>36</sup> based on what is experienced

<sup>37</sup> confident but risky

<sup>38</sup> without humility or decency

<sup>39</sup> silly ideas

<sup>40</sup> known and considered true

<sup>41</sup> pieces of information that are discovered after searching

<sup>42</sup> given a different form or appearance

<sup>43</sup> changed to a point of giving a wrong impression

<sup>44</sup> large amount



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:08:07] But the people who were first attracted to the idea of Dianetics, and to L.Ron Hubbard as an individual were not the sort of people who were to be [deterred](#)<sup>45</sup> by these kinds of negative comments.

[00:08:20] The kind of people who were attracted to Dianetics were the kind of people who had had negative, or less than 100% positive, experiences with traditional psychotherapy, and were looking for a new perspective.

[00:08:37] They were unlikely to care if experts from a field they didn't trust said something negative about a theory that they wanted to believe was true.

[00:08:48] Dianetics is a lengthy book with many new and [controversial](#) ideas that are considered to be complete rubbish by most mental health professionals, but it is at the heart of Scientology so I will try to explain some of them briefly.

[00:09:05] The main idea is about the formation of the human brain.

[00:09:10] L.Ron Hubbard proposed that your mind is divided into two main sections: an analytical mind and a [reactive](#)<sup>46</sup> mind.

[00:09:21] The analytical part works perfectly, Hubbard proposed, but the [reactive](#) mind can't think or make decisions.

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<sup>45</sup> stopped, prevented from continuing

<sup>46</sup> acting in response to a situation



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:09:30] The [reactive](#) mind is filled with all sorts of memories that send incorrect data back to the analytical mind, and this is part of what causes people to make bad life decisions and suffer from mental illness.

[00:09:46] Through a process that L.Ron Hubbard designed called [auditing](#)<sup>47</sup>, it is possible to control this [reactive](#) mind, and reach a [state](#)<sup>48</sup> called “Clear”.

[00:09:57] Now, although there is no evidence for this being valid science at all, and it's completely [contrary](#)<sup>49</sup> to how we believe the human brain works, it was very attractive to its small group of [devoted](#)<sup>50</sup> fans, or believers.

[00:10:14] At this time though, Scientology as a religion, or as a belief system, didn't exist.

[00:10:21] Dianetics was a psychiatric treatment, [albeit](#)<sup>51</sup> a completely [unproven](#)<sup>52</sup> one, and one that was considered to be a complete [sham](#)<sup>53</sup> by medical professionals, it was considered to be something that didn't work at all.

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<sup>47</sup> a scientology method used with the purpose of ridding one's mind of negative past influences

<sup>48</sup> condition

<sup>49</sup> opposite

<sup>50</sup> very loyal

<sup>51</sup> although

<sup>52</sup> not tested to be true

<sup>53</sup> something that is not what is presented to be



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:10:36] L.Ron Hubbard's primary income was still coming from science fiction writing, although he was struggling to [make ends meet](#)<sup>54</sup>, he was not paid very much for his work.

[00:10:47] [Frankly](#)<sup>55</sup>, he was more about quantity than quality, and even though he was publishing huge volumes, huge amounts of science fiction, he was still not earning very much money.

[00:11:01] There's an account, which is [fiercely](#)<sup>56</sup> [denied](#)<sup>57</sup> by Scientologists, of L.Ron Hubbard complaining about not being able to make enough money, and a fellow science fiction writer telling him that the way to get rich was by starting a religion.

[00:11:19] Whether that's true or not we will never know, but what is [undeniable](#)<sup>58</sup> is that within a few years L.Ron Hubbard had started the process of turning Dianetics from a [pseudo-medical](#)<sup>59</sup> procedure to something that was at the heart of this new religion, Scientology.

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<sup>54</sup> have enough money to cover his basic needs

<sup>55</sup> in an honest way

<sup>56</sup> in a powerful and intense way

<sup>57</sup> refused to admit that it is true

<sup>58</sup> unable to be denied

<sup>59</sup> a treatment that is not proved to be effective



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:11:40] As a medical procedure, Dianetics would be treated like any other medical procedure, and would have to display evidence that it was doing good, that it was helping people.

[00:11:51] As already mentioned, there was very little evidence that it actually worked, other than L.Ron Hubbard's stories about it working on himself, and various other stories of people who claimed that they had been [cured](#) by it.

[00:12:06] And as you will know there are plenty of government [guidelines](#)<sup>60</sup> and laws that restrict medicine to trained professionals, for very good obvious reasons.

[00:12:18] But L.Ron Hubbard realised that there was another [category](#)<sup>61</sup> that didn't need to provide evidence.

[00:12:25] Religion.

[00:12:27] If L.Ron could turn Dianetics from a medical procedure into a religious organisation, it wouldn't be required to demonstrate its [efficacy](#)<sup>62</sup>, it wouldn't be required to show that it worked, and it wouldn't be [bound](#)<sup>63</sup> by such strict [guidelines](#).

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<sup>60</sup> information that offers advice

<sup>61</sup> type of activity, field

<sup>62</sup> the ability to achieve results

<sup>63</sup> restricted, limited



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:12:46] This was either a moment of religious inspiration or of **cynical**<sup>64</sup> **opportunism**<sup>65</sup>, depending on how supportive you are of Scientology.

[00:12:56] So, in December of 1953, three and a half years after Dianetics was first published, L.Ron Hubbard **incorporated**<sup>66</sup> three new churches: The Church of Scientology, The Church of American Science and The Church of Spiritual Engineering.

[00:13:14] This was to be the start of his new religion, The Church of Scientology.

[00:13:20] And as part of this new religion, L.Ron Hubbard was able to charge a lot of money for it.

[00:13:27] 24 hours worth of auditing, of this Dianetics programme, would cost \$500, around \$5,000 in today's money.

[00:13:38] The cash soon started to **flood in**<sup>67</sup>, and L.Ron Hubbard went from struggling science fiction writer to the head of a new organisation that was generating large amounts of cash.

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<sup>64</sup> believing that he was only interested in himself

<sup>65</sup> the practice of taking advantage of any situation in order to gain power and money

<sup>66</sup> included

<sup>67</sup> arrive in great numbers



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:13:53] He **implemented**<sup>68</sup> a system **whereby**<sup>69</sup> he would receive a percentage of all income from these auditing sessions, and by 1957 he was reportedly earning around \$250,000 a year, which is over \$2 million in today's money.

[00:14:13] There was a very thin line between the funds of the Church of Scientology, as it was called, and L.Ron Hubbard's personal funds.

[00:14:23] He bought **extravagant**<sup>70</sup> houses which became Scientology centres.

[00:14:27] He bought boats, **plots**<sup>71</sup> of land, and real estate all over the world.

[00:14:33] And there were reports of him just withdrawing from the church's bank account and transferring to his own account, without any particular reason.

[00:14:44] Different **branches**<sup>72</sup> of the Church of Scientology **sprung up**<sup>73</sup> all over the world, and its members grew.

[00:14:52] This brought it further **into the public eye**<sup>74</sup>, and under closer examination.

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<sup>68</sup> started to use

<sup>69</sup> by which way

<sup>70</sup> very expensive and impressive

<sup>71</sup> big areas of land

<sup>72</sup> divisions, parts

<sup>73</sup> started suddenly to exist

<sup>74</sup> in a position that it receives lot of public attention



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:14:58] It might have started as a [harmless<sup>75</sup>](#) self-help system, but it started to be considered by many governments to be a dangerous [cult](#), and was [accused<sup>76</sup>](#) of [indoctrinating<sup>77</sup>](#) its followers.

[00:15:12] L.Ron Hubbard himself was [accused](#) of suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, being of [doubtful<sup>78</sup> sanity<sup>79</sup>](#), and of having [delusions<sup>80</sup>](#) of [grandeur<sup>81</sup>](#).

[00:15:24] If you've listened to the last episode on Mormonism, these [accusations<sup>82</sup>](#) might remind you of someone we learned about in that one.

[00:15:32] The result of this was that The Church of Scientology started to get in trouble in almost every country it was active in.

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<sup>75</sup> not being able to cause damage

<sup>76</sup> blamed for doing an illegal act

<sup>77</sup> teaching them to accept his set of beliefs without thinking about them a lot

<sup>78</sup> not known for certainty

<sup>79</sup> healthy mind

<sup>80</sup> beliefs that are not true

<sup>81</sup> being very important

<sup>82</sup> statements or claims that he had done something wrong



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:15:42] It was **banned**<sup>83</sup> in parts of Australia, the UK **banned** Scientologists from entering the country, and L.Ron was considered to be, and I'm quoting here, a “mental case” by the FBI, a “mental case” is a **slang**<sup>84</sup> term for a crazy person.

[00:16:00] But, as often tends to be the case, the more a belief system is **persecuted**<sup>85</sup> and **cast out**<sup>86</sup> from **mainstream**<sup>87</sup> society, the more its followers are drawn to it.

[00:16:12] Scientology continued to grow, with members joining from all over the world.

[00:16:18] But life wasn't any easier, and it continued to run into problems with a wide range of governments, so in 1967 L.Ron Hubbard decided to move the base of Scientology **offshore**<sup>88</sup>, and launched something called the Sea Org, the organisation of the sea.

[00:16:39] This was a **fleet**<sup>89</sup> of ships, initially three large boats, that travelled around the Mediterranean and Northern Atlantic, staying for short periods of time at each port.

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<sup>83</sup> not allowed

<sup>84</sup> an informal, everyday type of language

<sup>85</sup> hunted or being the target of hostile action because it is considered wrong

<sup>86</sup> thrown out, excluded

<sup>87</sup> ordinary, considered accepted by most people

<sup>88</sup> abroad, in another country

<sup>89</sup> a group of ships sailing together



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:16:52] It was **manned**<sup>90</sup> by the most dedicated members of the Church of Scientology, including L.Ron Hubbard and his family.

[00:17:01] It was **aboard**<sup>91</sup> the Sea Org, and over the period of the next five years or so, that his behaviour became even more **erratic**<sup>92</sup>, and he made some curious additions to the **doctrine**<sup>93</sup> of the Church of Scientology.

[00:17:16] L. Ron said he had discovered that humans had been brought to Earth 75 million years ago by a **galactic**<sup>94</sup> **dictator**<sup>95</sup> called Xenu, who put them all in a volcano and blew them up with hydrogen bombs.

[00:17:32] And the souls of these original humans stick to our bodies, and that's what causes us problems.

[00:17:39] Now, I should say that this story is not public, the Church of Scientology **denies**<sup>96</sup> its existence, but numerous ex-Scientologists have confirmed it.

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<sup>90</sup> occupied and used by

<sup>91</sup> on the ship

<sup>92</sup> very strange and unexpected

<sup>93</sup> a set of beliefs

<sup>94</sup> coming from a galaxy

<sup>95</sup> a leader with complete, absolute power

<sup>96</sup> says that is not true



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:17:51] According to them, as a Scientologist you are only allowed to learn about this story, which is essentially the account of the Creation, by going through numerous levels of training, which can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

[00:18:08] We'll discuss this further in a minute, but let's return to L.Ron Hubbard.

[00:18:13] Aboard the Sea Org, his mental and physical health seemed to be [in decline](#)<sup>97</sup>.

[00:18:19] He was a heavy smoker, and he had put on large amounts of weight.

[00:18:25] He was reportedly [erratic](#), and started behaving in an even stranger manner.

[00:18:31] But nobody was allowed to question him.

[00:18:35] After he returned to land, he continued to be [pursued](#)<sup>98</sup> by the authorities.

[00:18:40] He was [charged](#)<sup>99</sup> with obtaining money under false [pretences](#)<sup>100</sup> by a French court and sentenced to four years in prison in France.

[00:18:50] This was [in absentia](#)<sup>101</sup>, he wasn't actually in France and never served any time in prison.

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<sup>97</sup> gradually getting worse

<sup>98</sup> followed in order to be caught

<sup>99</sup> formally blamed for having done something illegal

<sup>100</sup> said things that are not true

<sup>101</sup> while not being present



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:18:57] And in 1980 he went into hiding. He was never seen again, and in 1982 it was announced that he had died.

[00:19:06] According to the Church of Scientology, L.Ron Hubbard had decided to drop his body because it was getting in the way of his research, and he had decided to continue his research on another planet.

[00:19:21] Quite a life, right?

[00:19:22] Now, if you thought that Scientology had ended with L.Ron Hubbard's death, you would be much [mistaken](#)<sup>102</sup>.

[00:19:31] After his death the religion was taken over by a young messenger, David Miscavige, who is to this day the leader of the Church of Scientology.

[00:19:41] With Miscavige [at its helm](#)<sup>103</sup>, the Church of Scientology has grown into an incredibly powerful organisation.

[00:19:49] Nobody seems to know how many Scientologists there actually are, and there are vastly different numbers depending on who you ask.

[00:19:59] The Church of Scientology says it has between 8 and 15 million members, which would make it on a similar level to Mormonism, as we heard about in the last episode, and even Judaism.

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<sup>102</sup> wrong

<sup>103</sup> in charge, in control



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:20:12] But most experts **dispute**<sup>104</sup> this number, with a recent documentary, called Going Clear (which is excellent by the way, I would certainly recommend it). This documentary said that it had fewer than 50,000 members.

[00:20:27] If this is indeed the case, one might wonder why Scientology seems to be so present in the news.

[00:20:34] Firstly, it is because it has this strange and **unorthodox**<sup>105</sup> founding story that we've just learned about.

[00:20:42] Secondly, it has a **vast**<sup>106</sup> amount of money - there was even an **advert**<sup>107</sup> for it during the 2021 Super Bowl.

[00:20:50] And thirdly, Scientology has done a very good job at **cultivating**<sup>108</sup> celebrities, people who are **in the public eye**<sup>109</sup> and talk about the religion during TV interviews.

[00:21:02] Tom Cruise and John Travolta are both Scientologists, and there is a long list of other Hollywood actors who are members of the church.

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<sup>104</sup> argue against, disagree

<sup>105</sup> not usual or accepted

<sup>106</sup> extremely big

<sup>107</sup> advertisement, a public notice promoting a product

<sup>108</sup> trying to win the favor of

<sup>109</sup> known by people in general



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:21:12] Of course, for the church, this is excellent PR, it's great marketing.

[00:21:17] These celebrities are normally huge [proponents<sup>110</sup>](#) of the benefits of Scientology, and will go on talk shows and explain how it has helped them.

[00:21:28] So, given how frequently Scientology is mentioned, it might be surprising to find out that the actual number of Scientologists is a lot smaller than you might think.

[00:21:40] Now, to its [devoted](#) followers, Scientology appears to be an amazing part of their lives. It helps them address their emotions, understand their life, and be better humans.

[00:21:53] But criticisms of Scientology didn't stop with L.Ron Hubbard, and the church has continued to be attacked on all sorts of [grounds<sup>111</sup>](#), theological, financial, and even criminal.

[00:22:06] The first reason is both financial and theological, and is about Scientology's status as a religion, and what this means in terms of how much tax it has to pay.

[00:22:17] If an organisation is a religion, there are some very attractive tax benefits in the United States.

[00:22:24] For 37 years The Church of Scientology was in battle with the US government. Scientology said it was a religion, and therefore didn't have to pay all

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<sup>110</sup> supporters

<sup>111</sup> factors, areas



A Brief History of Scientology

sorts of taxes. The US government argued that it wasn't a religion, and therefore owed almost a billion dollars in unpaid taxes over this almost 40 year period.

[00:22:49] In 1991 though, the IRS finally settled, the Inland Revenue Service finally settled, and agreed that Scientology was indeed a religion, and was therefore [exempt<sup>112</sup>](#) from paying these taxes.

[00:23:04] Now, you can agree or disagree with the criteria about what is or isn't a religion, and indeed we will discuss this more in the next episode, but the result meant that the church had saved almost a billion dollars in taxes, and this gives you an [indication<sup>113</sup>](#) about quite how much money it was making.

[00:23:25] Another criticism of the church, which is again related to its finances, is quite how much money it makes from each follower, and how hard it is to leave once you have joined it.

[00:23:38] If Scientology were a business, it would be an excellent business.

[00:23:43] To become a Scientologist, you don't just turn up one day and go to church and perhaps drop a few coins in a donation box, there are numerous courses and auditing sessions you need to do, each of which is paid.

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<sup>112</sup> excused, excluded from the obligation to

<sup>113</sup> a piece of information that shows something



A Brief History of Scientology

[00:23:59] It can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to reach the higher levels, and once you are there you don't stop, you continue doing these paid sessions.

[00:24:11] During these sessions you are asked to share very personal information, and this is all recorded by the church, there is a central [database<sup>114</sup>](#) of everything you have ever confessed to.

[00:24:24] Critics of the church say that this information is used as [blackmail<sup>115</sup>](#) to stop people leaving the church.

[00:24:31] Understandably, if you have confessed all of your sins, and talked about deeply personal memories or [traumas<sup>116</sup>](#), you probably wouldn't want these to be shared with the world, especially if you are a celebrity, an actor like Tom Cruise or John Travolta, let's say.

[00:24:50] Now, this is just a small list of the [accusations](#) against the church.

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<sup>114</sup> a large amount of information

<sup>115</sup> the act of forcing someone to do something by telling them that they will share their secrets if they don't do it

<sup>116</sup> feelings of deep emotional shock and pain



## A Brief History of Scientology

[00:24:55] Its leaders have been [accused](#) of physical and mental abuse, of murder, of [fraud](#)<sup>117</sup>, of [brainwashing](#)<sup>118</sup>, and all sorts of very [nasty](#)<sup>119</sup> activities.

[00:25:06] If you are interested in learning more about this, the Internet is full of tens of thousands of articles about all of the [accusations](#) against The Church of Scientology, and that would certainly keep you busy for a long time.

[00:25:20] So, that is Scientology.

[00:25:23] To its most [ardent](#)<sup>120</sup> followers, its most passionate followers, it is a way of making sense of the world, and becoming a better person.

[00:25:32] To its critics, it is a [cult](#), or even a criminal [enterprise](#)<sup>121</sup>.

[00:25:37] While one can only [hazard a guess](#)<sup>122</sup> at the true [intentions](#)<sup>123</sup> of its founder, L.Ron Hubbard, if even he had any true [intentions](#), what is certainly [undeniable](#) is that he has left a weird, weird legacy on the world.

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<sup>117</sup> the crime of getting money by tricking people and telling lies

<sup>118</sup> the method of changing people's beliefs by using psychological techniques

<sup>119</sup> bad

<sup>120</sup> showing strong feelings, passionate

<sup>121</sup> organisation

<sup>122</sup> risk making a guess

<sup>123</sup> things that he wanted to do, plans



**A Brief History of Scientology**

[00:25:56] OK then, that is it for part two of this mini-series on Mormonism and Scientology.

[00:26:02] I hope you enjoyed it, that you learned something new, and if you see large buildings in New York, London or Paris with Church of Scientology written on them, well now you'll know a little bit about the story behind them.

[00:26:17] Next up, in part three, we will come back to look at a comparison between Mormonism and Scientology, two very different religions, but two that have a uniquely American story, and have been criticised for similar reasons.

[00:26:33] In this episode we'll talk about the similarities and differences between the two, as well as think about the wider question of what is a religion, and ask ourselves whether they would have been possible in any country other than the USA.

[00:26:48] That is one of our member-only ones, and will be coming out on Tuesday.

[00:26:52] And on that note, if you enjoyed this episode, and you are wondering where to get all of our bonus episodes, such as parts one and part three of this mini-series, plus the transcripts, subtitles, and key vocabulary, then the place to go to is [leonardoenglish.com](http://leonardoenglish.com).

[00:27:10] I am on a mission to make Leonardo English the most interesting way of improving your English, and I would love for you to join me, and curious minds from 50 different countries, on that journey.



**English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #170**  
**A Brief History of Scientology**

[00:27:23] The place you can go to for all of that is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:27:29] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:27:35] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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## Key vocabulary

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Compelling</b>	very interesting and exciting
<b>Cult</b>	a closed, strange group of people that works in secret ways
<b>Raise</b>	bring up, present
<b>Inseparable</b>	unable to be treated separately
<b>Iconic</b>	very famous for a particular thing
<b>Controversial</b>	causing disagreement or discussion
<b>Exaggerated</b>	presented as more important than they were
<b>Excel</b>	be very good
<b>Claim</b>	say that something is a fact
<b>On track</b>	following a course that would make him succeed
<b>By any means</b>	in any way
<b>Unrelated</b>	having no connection with



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Prolific</b>	producing a great number of writings
<b>Genre</b>	a style or theme of literature
<b>Rank</b>	a position in the army
<b>Glorious</b>	deserving great admiration and honour
<b>Overly</b>	too, very
<b>Suited</b>	right, appropriate
<b>Duty</b>	responsibility or service
<b>Culminated</b>	reached a decisive point
<b>Ally</b>	a country that has officially agreed to help and cooperate with another
<b>Dismissed</b>	removed from office
<b>Sacked</b>	removed from employment, fired
<b>Mythology</b>	the collection of things said about something
<b>Abandoned</b>	left alone
<b>Collapsed</b>	failed completely
<b>Amenable</b>	willing to accept it



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Cured</b>	made him healthy
<b>Sceptic</b>	being doubtful and questioning accepted opinions
<b>Sought</b>	attempted, tried
<b>Cure</b>	make them healthy
<b>Codified</b>	arranged according to a system
<b>Canonical</b>	most important and being the basis of something
<b>Authoritative</b>	confident and reliable
<b>Seemingly</b>	appearing to be
<b>Empirical</b>	based on what is experienced
<b>Bold</b>	confident but risky
<b>Immodest</b>	without humility or decency, arrogant
<b>Nonsense</b>	silly ideas
<b>Acknowledged</b>	known and considered true
<b>Findings</b>	pieces of information that are discovered after searching
<b>Disguised</b>	given a different form or appearance



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Distorted</b>	changed to a point of giving a wrong impression
<b>Load</b>	large amount
<b>Deterred</b>	stopped, prevented from continuing
<b>Reactive</b>	acting in response to a situation
<b>Auditing</b>	a scientology method used with the purpose of ridding one's mind of negative past influences
<b>State</b>	condition
<b>Contrary</b>	opposite
<b>Devoted</b>	very loyal
<b>Albeit</b>	although
<b>Unproven</b>	not tested to be true
<b>Sham</b>	something that is not what is presented to be
<b>Make ends meet</b>	have enough money to cover his basic needs
<b>Frankly</b>	in an honest way
<b>Fiercely</b>	in a powerful and intense way
<b>Denied</b>	refused to admit that it is true



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Undeniable</b>	unable to be denied
<b>Pseudo-medical</b>	a treatment that is not proved to be effective
<b>Guidelines</b>	information that offers advice
<b>Category</b>	type of activity, field
<b>Efficacy</b>	the ability to achieve results
<b>Bound</b>	restricted, limited
<b>Cynical</b>	believing that he was only interested in himself
<b>Opportunism</b>	the practice of taking advantage of any situation in order to gain power and money
<b>Incorporated</b>	included
<b>Flood in</b>	arrive in great numbers
<b>Implemented</b>	started to use
<b>Whereby</b>	by which way
<b>Extravagant</b>	very expensive and impressive
<b>Plots</b>	big areas of land
<b>Branches</b>	divisions, parts



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Sprung up</b>	started suddenly to exist
<b>Into the public eye</b>	in a position that it receives lot of public attention
<b>Harmless</b>	not being able to cause damage
<b>Accused</b>	blamed for doing an illegal act
<b>Indoctrinating</b>	teaching them to accept his set of beliefs without thinking about them a lot
<b>Doubtful</b>	not known for certainty
<b>Sanity</b>	healthy mind
<b>Delusions</b>	beliefs that are not true
<b>Grandeur</b>	being very important
<b>Accusations</b>	statements or claims that he had done something wrong
<b>Banned</b>	not allowed
<b>Slang</b>	an informal, everyday type of language
<b>Persecuted</b>	hunted or being the target of hostile action because it is considered wrong
<b>Cast out</b>	thrown out, excluded



A Brief History of Scientology

**Mainstream** ordinary, considered accepted by most people

**Offshore** abroad, in another country

**Fleet** a group of ships sailing together

**Manned** occupied and used by

**Aboard** on the ship

**Erratic** very strange and unexpected

**Doctrine** a set of beliefs

**Galactic** coming from a galaxy

**Dictator** a leader with complete, absolute power

**Denies** says that is not true

**In decline** gradually getting worse

**Pursued** followed in order to be caught

**Charged** formally blamed for having done something illegal

**Pretences** said things that are not true

**In absentia** while not being present



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Mistaken</b>	wrong
<b>At its helm</b>	in charge, in control
<b>Dispute</b>	argue against, disagree
<b>Unorthodox</b>	not usual or accepted
<b>Vast</b>	extremely big
<b>Advert</b>	advertisement, a public notice promoting a product
<b>Cultivating</b>	trying to win the favor of
<b>In the public eye</b>	known by people in general
<b>Proponents</b>	supporters
<b>Grounds</b>	factors, areas
<b>Exempt</b>	excused, excluded from the obligation to
<b>Indication</b>	a piece of information that shows something
<b>Database</b>	a large amount of information
<b>Blackmail</b>	the act of forcing someone to do something by telling them that they will share their secrets if they don't do it
<b>Traumas</b>	feelings of deep emotional shock and pain



A Brief History of Scientology

<b>Fraud</b>	the crime of getting money by tricking people and telling lies
<b>Brainwashing</b>	the method of changing people's beliefs by using psychological techniques
<b>Nasty</b>	bad
<b>Ardent</b>	showing strong feelings, passionate
<b>Enterprise</b>	organisation
<b>Hazard a guess</b>	risk making a guess
<b>Intentions</b>	things that he wanted to do, plans

*We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.*

*What did you like? What could we do better?*

*What did you struggle to understand?*

Let us know in the forum [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com)

