The materials of Scientology comprise the largest written and spoken body of any single philosophic work. Those materials have given rise to the only major religion founded in the 20th century, and so stand as the spiritual cornerstone for several million adherents across all continents. And it was through the philosophy of Scientology that L. Ron Hubbard derived his solutions to criminality, drug addiction, illiteracy and social unrest—all now utilized by millions more in virtually every nation on earth.

But in his search for answers, he also touched on many issues and many facets of life—many outside of Scientology and the application of his discoveries to social problems. An example is “Religious Influence in Society,” which he wrote in 1976.

In this article, he examines the role of religion in society, why it is attacked, and how totalitarianism can take hold in a culture which does not continually strive to uphold trust, honesty and tolerance. It also explains the work that volunteer Scientologists do in numerous walks of life—and what they do to help alleviate the pain, evil and injustice of existence.

An early 20th century philosopher spoke of the impending decline of the West. What he failed to predict was that the West would export its culture to the rest of the world and thus grip the entire world in its death throes.

Today we are witnessing that decline and since we are involved in it, it is of utmost importance to us.
At stake are whether the ideals we cherish will survive or some new abhorrent set of values win the day.

These are not idle statements. We are today at a watershed of history and our actions today will decide whether the world goes up from here or continues to slide into some new dark age.

It is important to understand bad conditions don’t just happen. The cultural decay we see around us isn’t haphazard. It was caused. Unless one understands this he won’t be able to defend himself or reach out into the society with effectiveness.

A society is capable of surviving for thousands of years unless it is attacked from within or without by hostile forces. Where such an attack occurs, primary targets are its religious and national gods and heroes, its potential of leadership and the self-respect and integrity of its members.

Material points of attack are finance, communications, technology and a denial of resources.

Look around today and you will find countless examples of these points. They scream at us every day from the newspapers.

Probably the most critical point of attack on a culture is its religious experience. Where one can destroy or undermine religious institutions then the entire fabric of the society can be quickly subverted or brought to ruin.

As you read on . . . you will discover why this is such an important factor and what can be done about it.

Religion is the first sense of community. Your sense of community occurs by reason of mutual experience with others. Where the religious sense of community and with it real trust and integrity can be destroyed then that society is like a sand castle unable to defend itself against the inexorable sea.

For the last hundred years or so religion has been beset with a relentless attack. You have been told it’s the “opiate of the masses,” that it’s unscientific, that it is primitive; in short, that it is a delusion.

But beneath all these attacks on organized religion there was a more fundamental target: the spirituality of man, your own basic spiritual nature, self-respect and peace of mind. This black propaganda may have been so successful that maybe you no longer believe you have a spiritual nature but I assure you do.

In fact, you don’t have a soul, you are your own soul. In other words, you are not this book, your social security card, your body or your mind. You are you . . .

Convince a man that he is an animal, that his own dignity and self-respect are delusions, that there is no “beyond” to aspire to, no higher potential self to achieve, and you have a slave. Let a man know he is himself, a spiritual being, that he is capable of the power of choice and has the right to aspire to greater wisdom and you have started him up a higher road.
Of course, such attacks on religion run counter to man’s traditional aspirations to spiritual fulfillment and an ethical way of life.

For thousands of years on this planet thinking man has upheld his own spirituality and considered the ultimate wisdom to be spiritual enlightenment.

The new radical thought that man is an animal without a spiritual nature has a name: totalitarian materialism. Materialism is the doctrine that “only matter matters.” The apostles of this new thought are trying to sell everybody on the idea that people really down deep are just a mass and what the person wants to do is cohere with this mass and then be protected by the mass.

This philosophical position was very handy to militaristic and totalitarian governments and their advocates of the last hundred years who wished to justify their atrocities and subjugation of populaces.

One of the tricks of the game has been to attack religion as unscientific. Yet science itself is merely a tool by which the physical universe can be better controlled. The joke is that science itself can become a religion.

Gerhard Lenski on page 331 of his The Religious Factor, a Sociologist’s Inquiry, defines religion as “a system of beliefs about the nature of force(s), ultimately shaping man’s destiny, and the practices associated therewith, shared by members of a group.” Scientific activities can be as fanatical as religious ones. Scientific groups can themselves be religious “orthodox science” monopolies. The Einsteinian concept of space and time can itself become a holy writ, just as Aristotle’s writings were converted into dogmas by the orthodoxy to squash any new ideas in the Middle Ages. (Einstein himself until late in his life was looked upon as a maverick and denied admittance into learned societies.)

Science in itself can become a new faith, a brave new way of overcoming anxiety by explaining things so there is no fear of God or the hereafter.

Thus science and religion are not a dichotomy (pair of opposites). Science itself was borrowed from ancient religious studies in India and Egypt.

Religion has also been attacked as primitive. Too much study of primitive cultures may lead one to believe religion is primitive as it is so dominant in them and that “modern” cultures can dispense with it. The truth of the matter is that at no time is religion more necessary as a civilizing force than in the presence of huge forces in the hands of man, who may have become very lacking in social abilities emphasized in religion.

The great religious civilizing forces of the past, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and others, have all emphasized differentiation of good from evil and higher ethical values.

The lowering of church attendance in the United States coincided with a rise in pornography and general immorality, and an increase in crime which then caused a rise in numbers of police without a subsequent decline in actual moral aberration.

When religion is not influential in a society or has ceased to be, the state inherits the entire burden of public morality, crime and intolerance. It then
must use punishment and police. Yet this is unsuccessful as morality, integrity and self-respect not already inherent in the individual, cannot be enforced with any great success. Only by a spiritual awareness and inculcation of the spiritual value of these attributes can they come about. There must be more reason and more emotional motivation to be moral, etc., than threat of human discipline.

When a culture has fallen totally away from spiritual pursuits into materialism, one must begin by demonstrating they are each a soul, not a material animal. From this realization of their own religious nature individuals can again come to an awareness of God and become more themselves.

Medicine, psychiatry and psychology “solved” the whole problem of “human nature” simply by dumping it into the classification of material nature—body, brain, force. As they politically insist on monopoly and use social and political propaganda to enforce their monopoly, they debar actual search for real answers to human nature.

Their failures are attested by lack of result in the field of human nature. They cannot change man—they can only degrade. While asserting dominance in the field of human nature they cannot demonstrate results—and nowhere do they demonstrate that lack more than in their own persons. They have the highest suicide rate and prefer the use of force on others. Under their tutelage the crime rate and antisocial forces have risen. But they are most condemned by their attacks on anyone who seeks answers and upon the civilizing influences of religion.

Of course, if one is going to find fault with something, it implies that he wishes to do something about it and would if he could. If one does not like the crime, cruelty, injustice and violence of this society, he can do something about it. He can become a VOLUNTEER MINISTER and help civilize it, bring it conscience and kindness and love and freedom from travail by instilling into it trust, decency, honesty and tolerance.

Briefly, a Volunteer Minister fulfills the definition of religion in this increasingly cynical and hopeless world.

Let’s look again at the definition of religion.

In a few words, religion can be defined as belief in spiritual beings. More broadly, religion can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life. The quality of being religious implies two things: first, a belief that evil, pain, bewilderment and injustice are fundamental facts of existence; second, a set of practices and related sanctified beliefs that express a conviction that man can ultimately be saved from those facts *.

Thus, a Volunteer Minister is a person who helps his fellow man on a volunteer basis by restoring purpose, truth and spiritual values to the lives of others.

. . . A society gets what it concentrates upon. By concentrating on spiritual values instead of criminality a new day may yet dawn for man.
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