

## 10 QUESTIONS

### with Scientologist John Favaro

CREATED by science-fiction writer L Ron Hubbard in 1952, Scientology has seen its numbers grow hand-in-hand with its critics. Recently it has found itself in the news once again as Independent Senator Nick Xenophon called for an enquiry into the religion, branding it a criminal organisation.

But among the controversy and name-calling, the hopeful believers hold fast to their ways and urge people to understand their religion before they condemn it.

The *Area News* journalist Emily Tinker ventured into the 58-year-old church to talk with John Favaro, a believer for 20 years and Griffith's on Scientologist.

#### 1. What are the basic beliefs of Scientology?

To understand Scientology you have to understand what it is. It is the study of the spirit, the study of the individual. We believe that a man is his spirit and he never dies; he isn't a body.

It incorporates life, but the knowledge of Scientology is about the individual. It's the study of life, it's the study of you, of anybody. The first principle of Scientology is it is possible to know the mind and the spirit. By applying it, one can improve their health, their intelligence, their ability, their behaviour, their skills and even their appearance. The basic aim of Scientology is a civilisation without insanity, without criminals and without war.

#### 2. How does a Scientologist worship?

Every Sunday we have a service but the church is also open seven days a week. We do believe in God, there is no doubt about that.

Mr Hubbard discovered that through an exact route that one takes step-by-step you can achieve a higher state of awareness. A man is a man but he comes to understand how he is a spirit (as well). The question who is the supreme being, have we lived before, who am I and where will I go can be answered by Scientology.

That's why it's the fastest-growing religion in the world. There must be some truth for such a large amount of people and for it to grow so quickly.

We were never born and we never died and you discover god or infinity; as you learn and progress through the application and services of Scientology you can discover what God means to you.

#### 3. What made you believe in the religion?

That's very simple. I picked up the book the *Fundamentals of Thought* and started reading. The first thing I read was the dynamic principle to survive and I thought gee that makes sense.

Then I looked at other things as well and it's just very basic things you can apply to life. I found it very true to myself. Nothing was ever pushed on to me in the 20 years I've been there.

You were always told to look for yourself, see for yourself and don't believe what anybody says. Have a look and say does



that apply to life, is that true?

#### 4. The media report a lot on the crazier side of Scientology. What is the most misunderstood factor of Scientology?

What we do and what Scientology is, just the general understanding of what it is. People read bits and pieces here and there but the only way you can understand Scientology is by going to the source.

#### 5. Is it true that it costs a lot to be a Scientologist?

No absolutely not. I do extension courses and they cost about \$45 to do online. People may donate money but I've never had to spend a lot to be part of the church.

#### 6. Many people would say that Scientology is a cult. What

#### would you say to that?

A cult is like an enclosed group, like a secret organisation but Scientology is the most open organisation on the planet. You can walk into any church seven days a week and speak to any Scientologist. Everything's legal, everything we've done is above board.

It's just a misconception spread by those who don't understand. There are some readings that are kept secret until you reach an advanced level, there are certain drills and exercises to achieve a higher state of awareness and there are confidential materials because not all individuals are up to that level, you don't just release it to anybody. It's only natural.

#### 7. Scientology was invented by a science-fiction writer; does that make

#### you question its plausibility because he was known for creating fiction?

I've read a couple of his books but it doesn't bother me, I never thought anything of it. He was a professional in so many fields. He used his writing to finance his works, but he also studied nuclear physics, was a mathematician and was an engineer as well. Through that approach he discovered Scientology, because

To understand Scientology, you have to understand what it is. It is the study of the spirit, the study of the individual.

Scientology is very precise and very exact. He applied his research to Scientology so it does invariably work for everyone every time.

#### 8. Is one belief of Scientology that a human is an immortal alien spiritual being, that is trapped on planet Earth in a physical body?

No. Not at all. There's a spirit but where he came from is for the individual to find out. I've never come across aliens in my readings and I've read most of the books.

#### 9. Scientology is a way of life. What did you have to change in your life when you became a Scientologist?

The biggest factor was the communication for me and also my ability to help others. I did a communication course and that changed me tremendously. I used to be the most withdrawn guy you've ever seen in your life. I've seen so many people helped through Scientology. Becoming a Scientologist has changed my life completely and made me a better person.

#### 10. What do you think about Senator Nick Xenophon's call for an inquiry into Scientology?

The psychiatrists are trying to use the Senate through the Independent Senator Nick Xenophon to gag Scientology and Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR).

We don't want people to be drugged and so we get a lot of attacks from psychiatrists because we have an organisation set up called the CCHR and they're a watchdog for the psychiatrists.

It's the biggest reason why we're misunderstood because we're attacked by the psychiatrists.

We try and show what is happening and all the deaths caused by the drugs prescribed by the psychiatrists. We came out as a church trying to disclose what they are doing and they attack us for it to try and discredit us.



## BLAST FROM THE PAST

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Forget modern day talk of eco-friendly transport – these ladies were rocking the deadly treading way before it became fashionable.

Here, Julie Cottom, Helen Power and Joanne Lewis are shown taking a well-earned break during the local Pedal for Heart fundraising bike ride.

The photo isn't dated, but those delightfully fluffy hairstyles suggest it was snapped sometime in the glorious 1980s.



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