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Elements in New Religious Movements

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L. RON HUBBARD AND SCIENTOLOGY STUDIES

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L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology Studies

Elements in New Religious Movements

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Abstract: This Element surveys the history and practice of Scientology studies over the past sixty years and offers resources for scholars and students moving forward. Section 1 reviews the history of academic research on the subject from 1958 to the present day. Section 2 draws on the author's fieldwork with the Church of Scientology to illuminate how founder L. Ron Hubbard (1911–86) is viewed among contemporary members. Section 3 considers Hubbard's influence and legacy in terms of the church sites and institutions that exist today in connection with the soteriological "Bridge to Total Freedom." Section 4 introduces English-language archival resources and their strengths. Section 5 proposes some open areas for Scientology researchers. Finally, glossaries of terms and appendices are included with major dates in Hubbard's life and Scientology research and bibliographical information for major archival collections in North America.

Keywords: L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology studies, new religious movements, Church of Scientology, Scientologists

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