

is christian science and scientology the same thing

is christian science and scientology the same thing, a question that frequently arises due to the superficial similarities in their names and the spiritual or philosophical nature of their teachings, often leads to significant confusion. While both systems offer pathways to spiritual understanding and personal well-being, they are distinct in their origins, doctrines, practices, and organizational structures. This article delves into the core differences, examining their historical development, fundamental beliefs, key figures, and approaches to spiritual growth, to definitively answer whether Christian Science and Scientology are indeed the same. We will explore the unique tenets of Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, and contrast them with the principles and practices of Scientology, established by L. Ron Hubbard. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for anyone seeking clarity on these two influential, yet separate, spiritual movements.

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Origins and Founders of Christian Science and Scientology

The foundational difference between Christian Science and Scientology lies in their distinct origins and the charismatic figures who established them. Christian Science traces its roots to Mary Baker Eddy, an American author and religious leader. She developed her teachings in the latter half of the 19th century, culminating in the publication of her seminal work, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," in 1875. Eddy's spiritual journey and her insights into the nature of reality and healing formed the bedrock of the Christian Science movement.

In contrast, Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, an American science fiction author and explorer. Hubbard developed his theories in the mid-20th century, initially presenting them as a therapeutic system. His book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," published in 1950, laid the groundwork for Scientology. Over time, Hubbard expanded his work into a religion, introducing a complex philosophical and spiritual framework that became the basis of the Church of Scientology.

Mary Baker Eddy and the Birth of Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy's personal experiences with illness and her profound study of the Bible led her to develop a philosophy she termed Christian Science. She believed that the spiritual understanding of God and the universe could heal physical and mental ailments. Her teachings emphasized the unreality of material existence and the supremacy of divine Mind. Eddy organized the Church of Christ, Scientist, in 1879, providing a formal structure for her followers and propagating her unique theological perspective through writings and established branch churches.

L. Ron Hubbard and the Development of Scientology

L. Ron Hubbard's journey to creating Scientology involved a progression from his early work in Dianetics, which focused on the human mind and spiritual rehabilitation, to the establishment of a religion. Hubbard posited that individuals are immortal spiritual beings called thetans, who have forgotten their true nature through eons of existence. Scientology offers a path to spiritual enlightenment and freedom through auditing (a form of spiritual counseling) and training courses, aiming to increase spiritual awareness and capability.

Core Beliefs and Doctrines: A Comparative Analysis

While both movements claim to offer a path to spiritual understanding and improved well-being, their core beliefs diverge significantly. Christian Science is deeply rooted in a reinterpretation of Christian principles, while Scientology presents a distinct cosmology and set of doctrines derived from Hubbard's writings. Understanding these fundamental differences is key to distinguishing between the two.

Christian Science: Divine Mind and the Illusion of Materiality

The central tenet of Christian Science is the allness and perfection of God, understood as Divine Mind. Christian Scientists believe that because God is infinite and good, all that truly exists is spiritual and perfect. Consequently, they view material reality, including sickness, sin, and death, as illusions or misperceptions arising from a false sense of self, separate from God. The practice of Christian Science healing involves praying to understand and realize this spiritual truth, thereby overcoming the illusion of material discord.

Scientology: The Thetan, Auditing, and the Path to Clear

Scientology's doctrine centers on the concept of the thetan, the immortal spiritual being that each person truly is. According to Scientology, thetans have undergone a long process of forgetting their true nature, becoming entangled in the material universe and suffering from spiritual disabilities. A core practice in Scientology is auditing, a one-on-one counseling session conducted by an auditor using an E-meter, a device designed to measure spiritual state. Auditing aims to free the thetan from past traumas and engrams (painful experiences stored in the reactive mind), leading to a state of "Clear" and further spiritual progression up "The Bridge to Total Freedom."

Key Practices and Terminology in Christian Science and Scientology

The practices and the specific language used by Christian Scientists and Scientologists further highlight their distinct identities. While both may speak of spiritual progress and overcoming limitations, the methods and terminology employed are entirely different.

Christian Science Practices: Prayer, Study, and Church Services

The primary practice in Christian Science is spiritual healing through prayer, which is understood not as petitioning God for intervention, but as a scientific understanding of divine perfection. Christian Scientists regularly engage in prayerful contemplation and study of "Science and Health" and the Bible to realize their spiritual unity with God. Services in Church of Christ, Scientist, feature readings from the Christian Science textbook and the Bible, and are typically conducted by a First Reader. There are no paid clergy in the traditional sense; practitioners are dedicated healers who are available for those seeking spiritual assistance.

Scientology Practices: Auditing, Training, and the E-meter

Scientology is characterized by its structured system of auditing and training. Auditing sessions, as mentioned, are conducted by trained auditors and use the E-meter to identify areas of spiritual distress. Training involves studying Hubbard's extensive body of work and participating in practical exercises to develop spiritual abilities. The goal is to ascend the "Bridge to Total Freedom," a meticulously mapped progression of auditing levels and training courses designed to restore the thetan's full awareness and capability. The terminology is unique to Scientology, with terms like "engram," "reactive mind," "auditing," and "clear" being central.

Organizational Structure and Community

The way each movement is organized and the nature of its community also present clear differentiations. While both have established organizations, their structures and approaches to community life are distinct.

The Church of Christ, Scientist: Decentralized and Broadly Christian

The Church of Christ, Scientist, is structured with a Board of Directors in Boston, Massachusetts, overseeing its global operations. However, individual branch churches, known as local churches, are largely autonomous and serve their communities. The movement emphasizes its connection to the Bible and Christianity, viewing itself as a restoration and deeper understanding of original Christianity. The community often engages in mutual support and prayer for one another, with a strong emphasis on spiritual self-reliance and reliance on Divine Principle.

The Church of Scientology: Hierarchical and Universal in Ambition

The Church of Scientology has a more centralized and hierarchical organizational structure. The highest authority is generally considered to be the Sea Organization, a dedicated group of Scientologists who commit their lives to the religion. Scientology aims to be a universal religion, offering its teachings and practices to people of all backgrounds. Its organizational structure is designed to facilitate the delivery of auditing and training services, with a clear progression and hierarchy of attainment within its ranks. There is a strong emphasis on organizational growth and the expansion of Scientology's reach.

Views on Healing and Health

Perhaps one of the most significant points of divergence, and a common area of public inquiry, is the approach to health and healing. Both movements claim to offer paths to improved well-being, but their methodologies are fundamentally different.

Christian Science: Spiritual Healing as Primary

Christian Scientists believe that spiritual understanding of God's perfection can bring about physical and mental healing. They do not deny the existence of illness in the material sense but consider it an error of mortal mind that can be corrected through

spiritual means. While followers are not forbidden from seeking medical care, the primary approach to healing within Christian Science is through prayer and spiritual treatment provided by Christian Science practitioners. The emphasis is on the power of Mind to overcome material conditions.

Scientology: Mind-Body Connection and Dianetics

Scientology's precursor, Dianetics, focused extensively on the mind-body connection and the eradication of past traumas believed to cause psychosomatic ailments. While Scientology offers spiritual rather than medical healing, its approach involves addressing the mental and spiritual causes of suffering. Auditing aims to restore spiritual well-being, which proponents believe can then positively impact physical health. However, the Church of Scientology does not discourage conventional medical treatment and has a complex stance on the interplay between spiritual and physical health. It is crucial to note that Scientology's practices are not considered medical treatments by mainstream scientific and medical communities.

Is Christian Science and Scientology the Same Thing? A Definitive Answer

To definitively answer the question: **is christian science and scientology the same thing**, the answer is a resounding no. Despite superficial similarities in their names and their shared pursuit of spiritual well-being, they are fundamentally distinct entities with separate founders, origins, theological frameworks, doctrines, practices, and organizational structures. Christian Science is a denomination that emerged from Christian teachings, emphasizing spiritual healing through the understanding of divine Mind. Scientology, on the other hand, is a religion founded on the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard, focusing on the spiritual nature of the thetan and using auditing and training to achieve spiritual enlightenment and freedom. Each offers a unique path, and their perceived resemblances are largely superficial, stemming from their spiritual aspirations rather than shared foundational principles.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary founder of Christian Science, and when was it established?

A: The primary founder of Christian Science was Mary Baker Eddy, and it was established in the latter half of the 19th century, with her book "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" published in 1875.

Q: Who founded Scientology, and what was its initial focus?

A: Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, and its initial focus was on mental and spiritual rehabilitation, as outlined in his book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," published in 1950.

Q: What is the core belief system of Christian Science regarding God and reality?

A: The core belief of Christian Science is the allness and perfection of God as Divine Mind. They believe that all that truly exists is spiritual and perfect, and material existence, including sickness and death, is an illusion.

Q: What is the central concept of the individual in Scientology?

A: In Scientology, the central concept of the individual is the thetan, which is described as an immortal spiritual being that has forgotten its true nature and capabilities.

Q: What are the main practices for spiritual growth in Christian Science?

A: The main practices for spiritual growth in Christian Science involve spiritual healing through prayer, the study of "Science and Health" and the Bible, and realizing one's spiritual unity with God.

Q: What are the key practices used in Scientology to achieve spiritual advancement?

A: The key practices in Scientology to achieve spiritual advancement are auditing, a form of spiritual counseling using an E-meter, and training courses based on L. Ron Hubbard's teachings, all aimed at progressing up "The Bridge to Total Freedom."

Q: Do Christian Scientists typically seek medical treatment?

A: Christian Scientists believe in spiritual healing as their primary method but are not forbidden from seeking conventional medical care, though the emphasis is on spiritual intervention.

Q: Does Scientology discourage conventional medical treatment?

A: The Church of Scientology does not explicitly discourage conventional medical treatment and acknowledges the interplay between spiritual and physical well-being, though its primary focus is on spiritual solutions.

Q: How is Christian Science related to traditional Christianity?

A: Christian Science views itself as a restoration and deeper understanding of original Christianity, reinterpreting Christian doctrines and emphasizing spiritual healing as taught by Jesus.

Q: Is Scientology considered a branch of Christianity?

A: No, Scientology is not considered a branch of Christianity. It is a distinct religion with its own unique cosmology, doctrines, and practices that are separate from Christian theology.

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