

Extract from...

**The Religion Business:
Cashing In On God**

Ben Bennetts

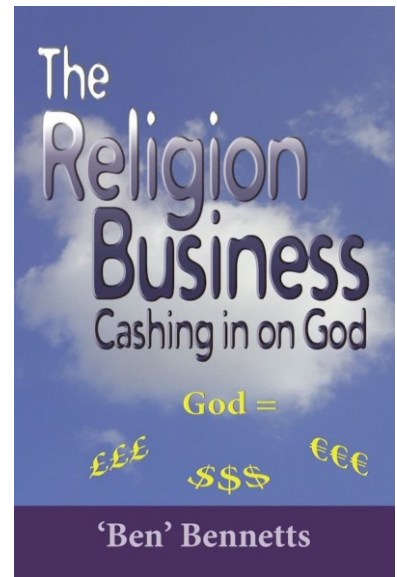
Published 2012

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$6.99

Also available in paperback form

\$11.35/£7.99



Faith Warning!

Do not read this book if you have a blind faith in the existence of God, or any other god(s), and you don't want your faith shaken, stirred or otherwise disturbed.

If you make the assumption that all gods, including God, are the inventions of fertile, imaginative and in some cases, manipulative minds, and then take a look at any specific religion, you see it for what it is – a business like any other commercial business, marketing and selling a product in exchange not only for money but, in many cases, mind control of a large group of people. This book is written from this point of view and surveys both ancient and modern religions, questioning the evidence for the existence of God and challenging the beliefs, doctrines and practices of major religions such as Christianity and Islam.

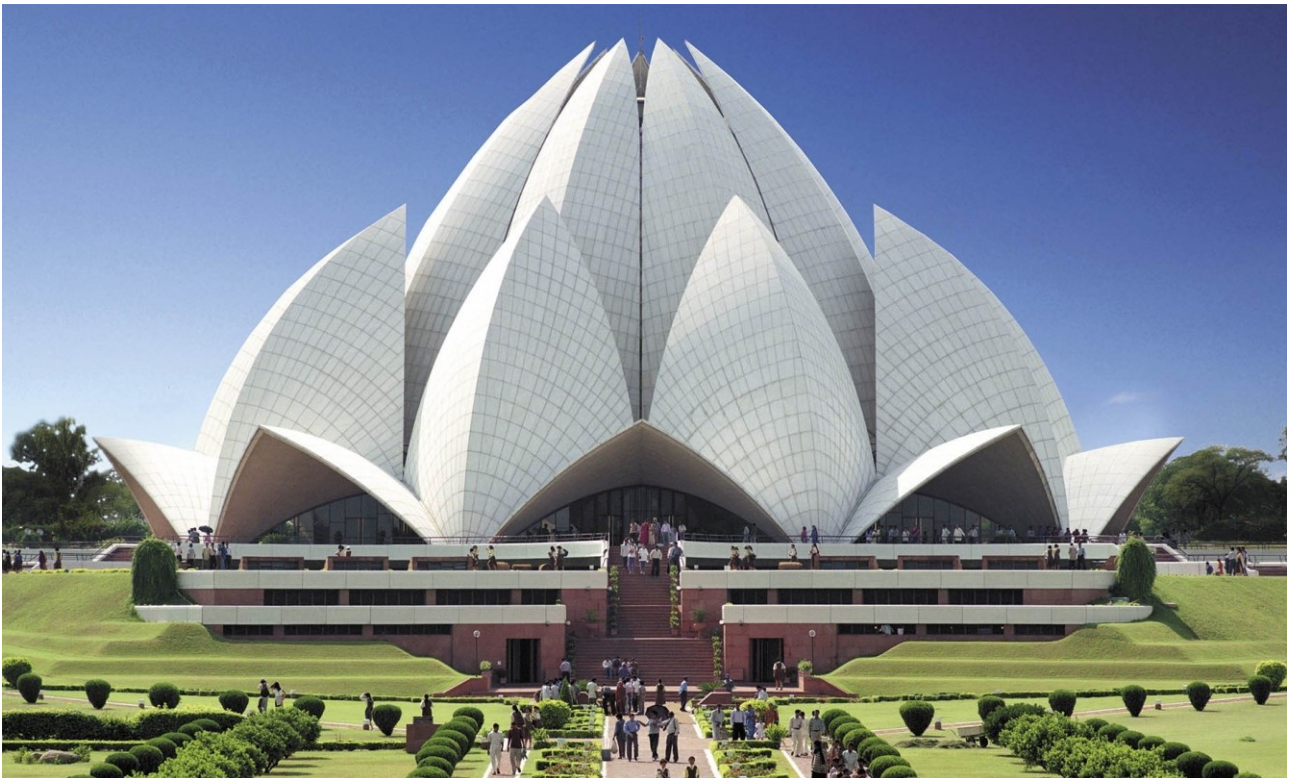
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Chapter 5 Extract: New Religious Movements (NRMs)

Finally, I'll take a brief look at what are called New Religious Movements (NRMs), also known as religious cults. Although there's no precise definition of an NRM, the term is generally assigned to any religious movement founded in the last 200 years.

Wikipedia's entry on NRMs¹ lists over 250 movements. Here are some of the more esoteric and exotic entries:

- Assemblies of Yahweh: Adventists.
- Assembly of Christian Soldiers: founded by the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s to use tax-exempt donations to fund segregated white-only schools in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi.
- Aum Shinrikyo: responsible for the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, killing 12 commuters and seriously injuring another 54.

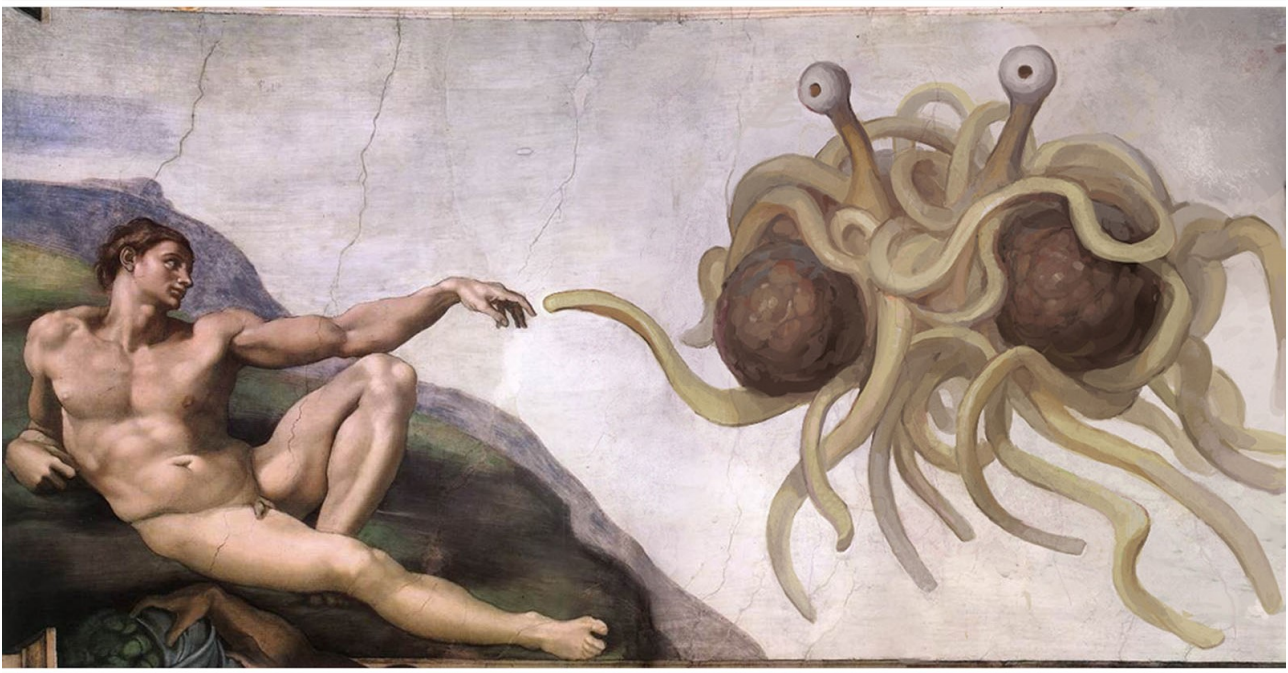


Baha'i Lotus Temple, New Delhi

- Baha'i Faith: linking Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.
- Branch Davidian: David Koresh's version of the Seventh Day Adventists.
- Cargo cults: primitive native religions based on first encounters with cargo transporters such as ships and airplanes. One example is the *John Frum* cult that sprung up in 1940 on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu following the arrival of American troops and their cargo supply ships on the island.
- God Saves The Earth Flying Saucer Foundation: a mix of Buddhism, Taoism and UFOlogy.
- Church of Aphrodite: monotheistic neopagan religion based on Aphrodite as the one true Goddess.
- Church of Satan: dedicated to satanic rituals and carnal pleasures.
- Cyberchurch: a Christian church based on the use of the internet to hold meetings.
- Dances of Universal Peace: based on Sufism but uses mantras from different religions.
- Dianic Wicca: female only witchcraft, focusing on feminist issues in religion.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_new_religious_movements

- Esoteric Nazism: race-specific pre-Christian Nazi beliefs.
- Falun Gong: Chinese fusion of Buddhism, Taoism and martial arts.



The Flying Spaghetti Monster Church

- Flying Spaghetti Monster Church, also known as *Pastafarianism*: based on a dogma of 'there is no dogma' and designed originally to challenge Kansas State Board of Education's 2005 ruling that Intelligent Design (see Chapter 6) could be taught in schools as an alternative to Darwinian evolution.
- Ghost Dance: a religion based on native American Paiute beliefs.
- Jedi Church: based on the 'guardians of peace and justice' in the Star Wars films.
- Jehovah's Witnesses: Christian in origin, believers in Armageddon, and well-known for their door-to-door proselytizing and life-threatening views on blood transfusion.
- Mormonism: derived from the Latter Day Saint movement and notorious for its early-days advocacy of polygamy, allegedly with underage girls involved.
- Nation of Yahweh: a religion specifically for black Hebrew Israelites based on the claim that the original Jews were black Africans and not Arabs.
- Opus Dei: a secretive organisation of the Roman Catholic Church, featured in Dan Brown's 2003 novel, *The Da Vinci Code*.
- Raëlism: another UFO religion with additional emphasis on sensuality and sexual pleasure!
- Salvation Army: an evangelical Christian church, well known for its charitable work.
- Scientology: founded by the science-fiction author, L Ron Hubbard, and notorious as a business masquerading as a religion. More later.
- Shakers: known as the Shaking Quakers with emphasis on social equality and the rejection of sexual relations which has contributed to their decline!
- Transcendental Meditation: an Indian neo-Hindu cult introduced by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and made famous by the patronage of the Beatles pop group in the 1960s.

It seems invidious to select just one of these New Religious Movements for closer examination but that's exactly what I'll do: the Church of Scientology.

Church of Scientology

'You don't get rich writing science fiction. If you want to get rich, you start a religion.'

Attributed to L Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, in response to a question from the audience during a meeting of the Eastern Science Fiction Association on 7 November 1948, as quoted in a 1994 affidavit by Sam Moskowitz²

Scientology was created by L Ron Hubbard (1911 – 1986) to further his theories of dianetics. Hubbard was an American pulp fiction³ science-fiction author who developed dianetics as a self-help system. Dianetics considered the mind to be in three parts: the analytical, the subconscious or reactive, and the somatic (physical). Hubbard proposed an auditing process for identifying and removing past painful events from the reactive mind. He claimed that the process would reduce or even eliminate the effect of the subconscious reactive elements and so create a mind that was happier, more ethical and more aware. The auditing process was carried out by questions asked by a trained dianetic practitioner. It was claimed the process would remove memories of pain, shock or trauma. These memories were called *engrams*.



L Ron Hubbard, 1811 - 1986

After *engram* removal, Hubbard claimed that intelligence would be increased, emotions eliminated and many illnesses of the mind would be alleviated or even cured. Such illnesses included 'arthritis, allergies, asthma, some coronary difficulties, eye trouble, ulcers, migraine headaches, sex deviations and even death'. Hubbard claimed these illnesses to be psychosomatic – bodily symptoms caused by mental or emotional disturbances.

Hubbard published a summary of dianetics in the pulp fiction magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1950 and followed it up with a book entitled *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* in the same year. The book was an instant success despite scepticism from the more orthodox scientific and medical communities and Hubbard went on to found Dianetic Foundations in six American cities.

Following complaints that he was teaching and practicing medical techniques without a licence and faced with the closure of his Foundations, Hubbard decided to extend the concept into a non-medical domain. He called this extension *scientology* and said the goal was 'to rehabilitate the individual's spiritual nature so that he may reach his full potential'. In 1978, Hubbard published a series of courses called New Era Dianetics, designed to 'find the problem in the past that's causing the current problem and then remove the past problem, or memory of the past problem, thereby solving the current problem'.⁴

Needless to say, Hubbard's ideas were attacked by scientific and medical practitioners.⁵ His approach was labelled pseudoscience (information that is presented as scientific but which fails to meet scientific standards of reputable evidence and fact), and 'a blend of science fiction and the occult, possibly assisted by hypnosis'. Despite these criticisms, Hubbard continued to grow his organisation. By introducing the

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_controversies#L._Ron_Hubbard_and_starting_a_religion_for_money

³ Pulp fiction refers to inexpensive fiction magazines printed on cheap paper with ragged, untrimmed edges and published between the 1890s and 1950s. They were devoted to many literature genres such as westerns, gangsters, romance, war, soft porn (early twentieth-century style) and science fiction/fantasy.

⁴ These are my words based on my interpretation of Hubbard's postulate. Hubbard dressed up the ideas behind scientology in a load of pseudoscientific mumbo jumbo designed, one suspects, to confuse the recipient and impress the non-cognoscenti.

⁵ And even by fellow science-fiction authors. The great sci-fi author Isaac Asimov is said to have proclaimed Hubbard's book on dianetics as 'gibberish'!

concept of the *thetan* – ‘the true self of a person, an immortal, omniscient and potentially omnipotent entity that had forgotten its full capabilities and was trapped in a *meat body*’ – he managed to claim that scientology was a religious movement, thereby qualifying for tax reliefs. Although not a religious concept (that was to come later), the *thetan* enabled Hubbard to move dianetics away from mainstream medical practice and more into a spiritual environment. He claimed that the entrapped *thetans* were the result of events that occurred millions of years ago and that the aim of scientology was to rehabilitate the *thetan* in the human body so as to allow the body to achieve its full potential. He developed an instrument called the E-meter⁶ that would reveal the innermost thoughts in the subconscious/reactive mind and allow a release of the memories that were stopping the mind from using the *thetan* to full effect.



Mind, Body and... Thetan

The Church of Scientology was organised differently than the Dianetic Foundations. There was one central Scientology organisation, headed by Hubbard, responsible for designing training courses and ‘training the trainers’. Branches were set up as franchises, similar to popular fast-food chains, with franchise holders paying a percentage income royalty back to the central organisation. As the *thetan* concept matured, so too did the religious flavour of the organisation with franchise holders becoming clerics of the ‘church’. Stories began to circulate about the levels of control placed on franchise holders, preventing them from breaking away, and about the amounts of money that were being extracted by the scientologists. It seemed also that everyone was having a go at scientology, masterminded, according to Hubbard, by the US Government: the FBI, the US Internal Revenue Service (withdrawal of tax exemption), the US Food and Drug Administration (false medical claims for ‘radiation cure’ pills and the E-Meter), the Australian State of Victoria (with accusations of blackmail, extortion, brainwashing and causing mental health problems), British Minister of Health (scientologists were barred from entering the UK because they were undesirable aliens), and further accusations in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

Hubbard went on the offensive with three tactics: total disconnection and isolation of scientologists from any other organisation including family members; an encouragement for scientologists to produce sneak reports on fellow scientologists containing knowledge of any transgressions or misapplication of scientology techniques; and a mandate that said that it was fair game to injure and/or deprive anyone of

⁶ The E-meter is a variation of the well-known Wheatstone Bridge electrical instrument which passes a current through an unknown resistive media, in this case the skin, to measure electrical conductance (the opposite of resistance). The Church of Scientology presented it as ‘a religious artefact used to measure the state of electrical characteristics of the static field surrounding the body thereby revealing the individual’s innermost thoughts’. Hmm.

property who was deemed to be an enemy of scientology. The tactics might have been vicious, but they were no worse than has been applied by Christians, Jews and Islamists in the names of their religions.



**Some of Hubbard's Messengers,
~1970**

In the face of all this opposition, Hubbard, now a very rich man, acquired three ocean-going ships and moved his organisation, renamed the Sea Org, onto the high seas. He was accompanied by scantily clad young girls – members of the Commodore's Messenger Organisation – although allegedly just as personal servants, not for sexual purposes save maybe visual titillation. While he was constantly on the move, he spun yet more stories onto the church. In particular, he repackaged some of the higher-level courses as secret, only to be revealed when the trainee scientologist had reached a certain level of competence and had parted with a large sum of money. These levels were dubbed Operating Thetan, OT, levels.

Hubbard then released new and higher OT-level courses based on a mythical disaster that had occurred 'on this planet, and on another seventy-five planets which formed a Confederacy, 75 million years ago' (OT-3, the Wall of Fire). Budding scientologists had to complete the first two OT levels before learning how *Xenu*, the leader of the Galactic Confederacy, shipped billions of people to Earth in a Douglas DC-8-like spacecraft, stacked them around volcanoes and blew them up with hydrogen bombs. The victims' traumatised spirits, their *thetans*, were stuck together at 'implant stations', brainwashed with false memories and then contained within new human 'meat bodies'. Thus was explained the origin of how the *thetans* had become entrapped within the human bodies.⁷



Xenu, Leader of the Galactic Federation

Hubbard was to go on and release a further five OT courses up to OT-8, the Truth Revealed, a scientologist's version of *nirvana*.

In the end, Hubbard's behaviour became erratic and irrational, his persecution mania mammoth sized and he was vilified everywhere he tried to settle. He spent his final years in deep hiding living in a luxury motor home on a ranch in California and eventually dying from a stroke in 1986. Nobody has ever revealed how much money either he or the organisation made from scientology but Forbes Magazine estimated that he personally accrued over \$200 million in 1982. On his death, the organisation declared that he had 'dropped' his human body and gone off to another planet to continue his work but that he would return one day as a political leader.

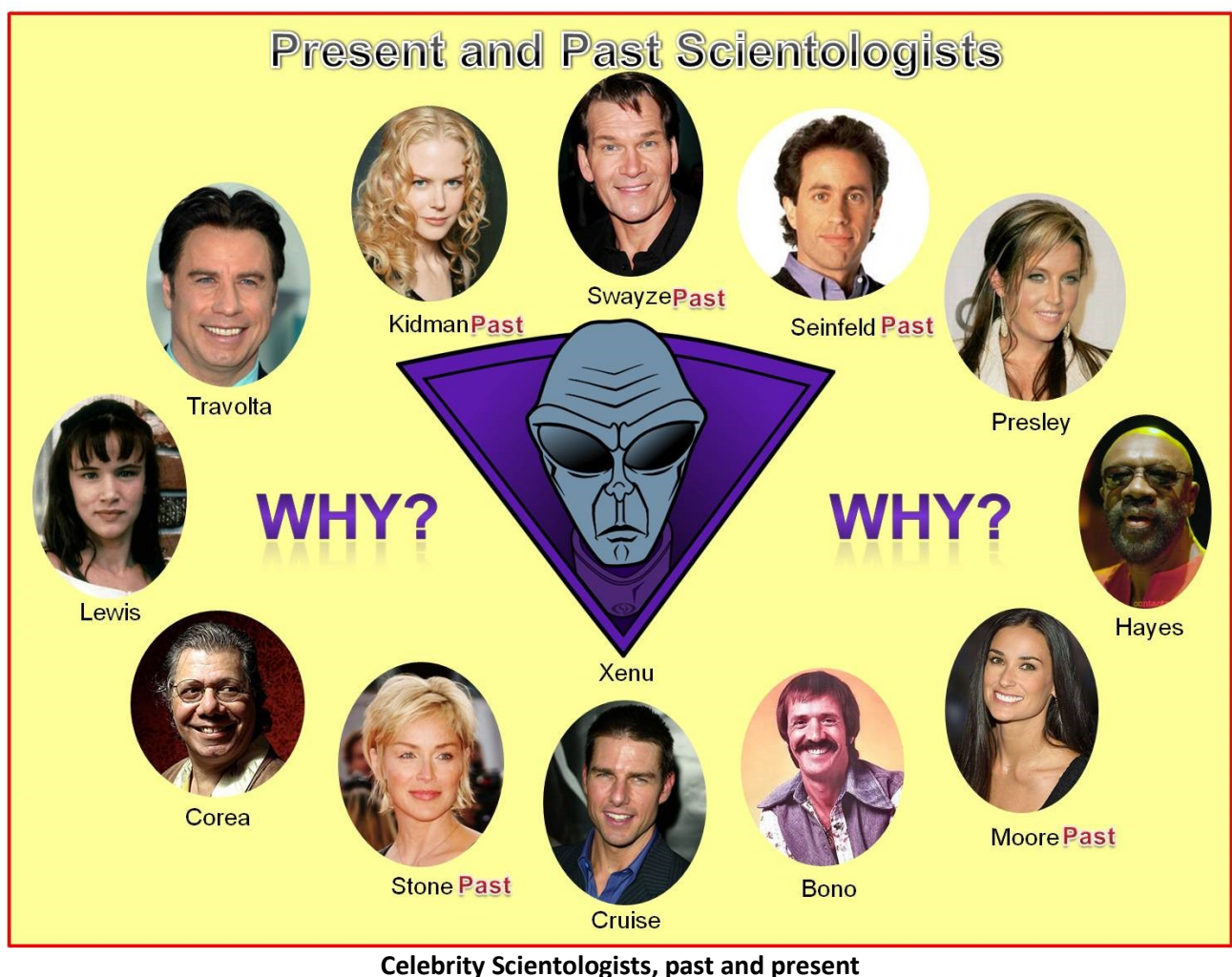
Hubbard's name is kept alive by the modern version of scientology. He is referred to as The Source and there are many signs that he is being turned into yet another prophet similar to Jesus and Muhammad. Nowadays (2011), scientology www.scientology.org, presents itself as 'helping man improve his lot through understanding'. The question 'Does scientology admit to a God?' is answered by 'the concept of God is expressed as the Eighth Dynamic—the urge toward existence and survival as infinity. This is also identified as the Supreme Being.' Basically, 'the concept of God rests at the apex of universal survival'.

Stop awhile and consider what these words mean – *the urge towards existence and survival as infinity; apex of universal survival?* Out of context, they mean nothing. After I've paid a lot of money, they may have some mystical meaning in the context of the previous seven Dynamics but I am not motivated to pay the

⁷ This, of course, is classic science fiction fodder. The Scientology Church tried hard to keep this story secret, only to be revealed to those who (a) were ready for its dangerous knowledge and (b) had lots of money. The story was leaked however, by court documents and Hubbard's notes, and is now widely available on the Web. Google 'Xenu' and see where it takes you, but don't waste too much time!

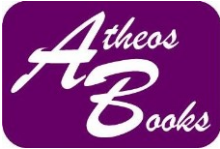
money to find out. The story of L Ron Hubbard and the development of his so-called church based on a series of ever-expanding concepts reads like a sprawling science fiction novel. Looked at in the cold light of day, stripped of its pseudoscience mumbo jumbo and meaningless sound bite phrases, scientology is just a money-making machine.

What amazes me about organisations like the Scientology Church is how people fall for this kind of stuff. What is it that attracts well-known and seemingly intelligent people to join, such as actors and entertainers Tom Cruise, Chick Corea, John Travolta, Lisa Maria Presley, Juliette Lewis, Isaac Hayes, Sonny Bono, and, in the past but now withdrawn, author William S Burroughs, singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, murderer Charles Manson, actresses Nicole Kidman, Sharon Stone and Demi Moore, actor Patrick Swayze, and comedian Jerry Seinfeld?⁸ The short answer is, I don't know. Maybe they have too much money? Maybe they don't think it through? Maybe they have an innate affiliation with science fiction dressed up as a religion? Or maybe they are gullible or, in some other way, susceptible to smooth-talking salesmen? Whatever the reason, the Church of Scientology is probably the most fabricated (made up for the purpose of deception) religion I have looked at in these two chapters.



(^_^)

⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Scientologists, http://www.adherents.com/largecom/fam_scientologist.html



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The Religion Business: Cashing In On God

Ben Bennetts

Published 2012

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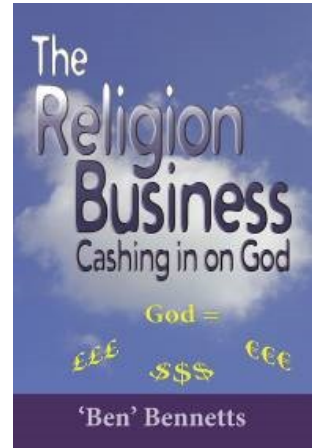
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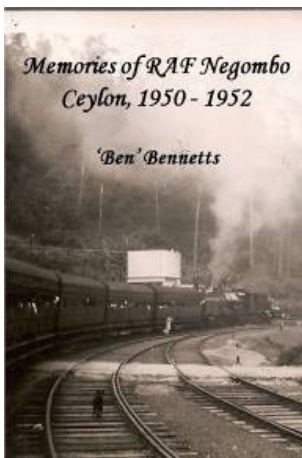
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Memories of RAF Negombo Ceylon, 1950 – 52

Ben Bennetts

Assisted by Maureen Wyatt (née Bennetts)

Published 2012, revised 2014

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$0.00/\$0.99

My father was stationed in RAF Negombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the early '50s. I joined him along with my mother and sister. This is an account of my life in Ceylon, my first experience of living outside of the UK. The essay tells of trips to the jungle, life on the RAF camp, long troopship journeys, encounters with wild animals (some in the living room), and falling in love for the first time (I was 10 years old!).

This essay was also my first attempt to publish an e-book containing photographs and other images. I've improved my skills in later e-books. The 2014 version contains better images, better formatting, grammar improvements, and the removal of the end notes.

**“On one occasion ...”
Ivory Tower and Road Warrior Stories**

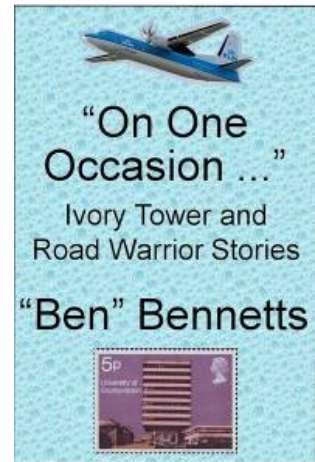
Ben Bennetts

Published 2013

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$3.99

I am a retired electronics consultant engineer. During my professional career, I spent eleven years as a researcher and lecturer at Southampton University (the Ivory Tower) and a further twenty-eight years in industry, mostly as a one-man-band consultant roving the world (the Road Warrior). These are my stories: some funny, some sad, and some just interesting.



**Tales from the Trails
Part 1: UK trails**

Ben Bennetts

Published 2014

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$1.99



Walking is good for you. It provides physical exercise and stimulates the senses. It gets you out and about. You see places that can only be reached on foot. It also has its moments, sometimes funny sometimes dangerous, plus mishaps and other adventures. This book is a collection of observations, stories, advice and photographs from the long-distance walks made by the author, and his wife, after retiring at age 66 in 2007. Part 1 covers UK long-distance trails including many UK National Trails.

Part 2, in preparation, will cover long-distance walking in the Himalaya Mountains in Nepal and India, the lower Sierra Nevada mountains in Spain, and along the *levadas* of Madeira.

Fingers to the Keyboard: 2000 - 2014

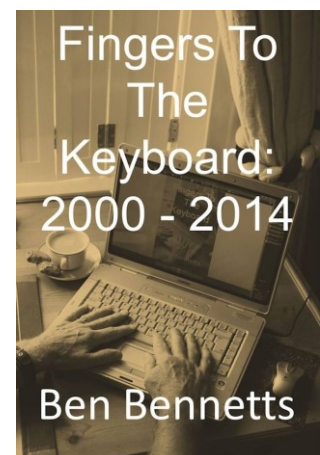
Ben Bennetts

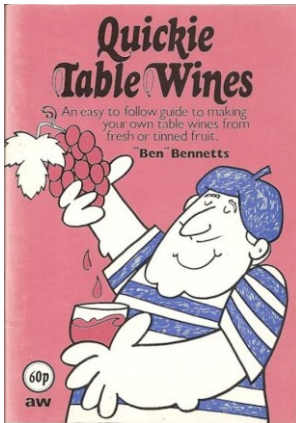
Published 2014

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$3.99

In-between writing ‘proper’ books, I often dash off an essay on anything that amuses me or otherwise catches my attention. *Fingers to the Keyboard* is an eclectic mix and collection of these essays on topics such as the stupidity of politicians, the idiosyncrasies of English grammar, the baiting of scammers, the trials and tribulations of being hard of hearing, commentaries on various sports, religious extremism, the beauty of mathematics, film and book reviews, and a miscellany of grumpy old man moans and groans.





Quickie Table Wines

Ben Bennetts

Published 1977, re-published 2015

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$0.00

In 1977, I published a small 16-page booklet titled *Quickie Table Wines*. It was a simple “do this, do that” set of instructions designed to produce palatable home-made fruit-based table wines within 4 to 5 weeks. The technique had been well researched and proven by experiment and the booklet went on to become a UK best seller, selling just under 12,000 copies before publication ceased sometime around the mid-’80s.

Friends and family still talk about the booklet and their wine-making experiences and I

have decided to re-publish as an e-book. The prices in the booklet are 1977 prices but the technique is ageless.

Download a free MOBI (Kindle), EPUB (iPad) or PDF file from Smashwords and enjoy.

The Wondrous Wacky World of Words

Ben Bennetts, with illustrations by Jenny Bennetts

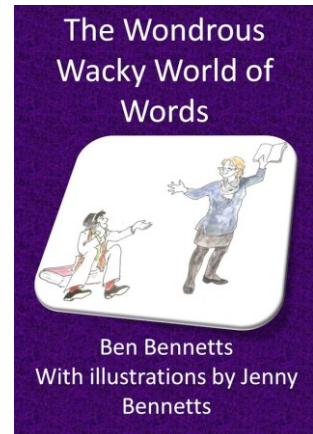
Published 2015

www.smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle Store

\$6.06 (e-book), \$11.00 (paperback)

How are you on words? Do you know your oxymorons from your tautologies; your alliterations from your euphemisms; your acronyms from your homonyms; or your onomatopoeias from your palindromes? Is *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* a nonce word or a nonsense word? Can you create neologisms by prefixing, suffixing, back-forming, compounding, and blending with the best of them? Can you define the word *word* without using the word *word*? Do you know what it means to *munch a brick* or *bend someone’s ear*? Is a *fire distinguisher* a spoonerism or a malapropism? Are you a logophile, an etymologist, a lexicologist, a philologist, a logologist, a linguist or just someone who enjoys a walk in the park?

If you know the answers to all these questions, you’ve no need to read this essay. If not, read on and be amused, amazed and ameliorated.



Tales From The Trails Part 2: non-UK Trails



Ben Bennetts

Tales from the Trails Part 2: non-UK trails

Ben Bennetts

Published 2015

\$1.99

Tales from the Trails Part 2 is a follow on from Part 1 and covers long-distance walking in the Himalaya Mountains in Nepal and India, the lower Sierra Nevada mountains in Spain, and along the *levadas* of Madeira.

About The Author



With Fat Betty, Coast-to-Coast, 2010

I'm a retired electronics engineer in my mid-70s who now writes blogs and books and, with my wife Carol, walks long-distance trails. During my professional career, I authored two technical books and just under a hundred technical papers. Since retiring in 2007, I've written *The Religion Business: Cashing In On God* (2012), *On One Occasion ... Ivory Tower and Road Warrior Stories* (2013), *Tales from the Trails, Part 1 UK trails* (2014), *Part 2* (2015), *Fingers to the Keyboard* (2014), an essay describing my life as a young boy in Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka, *Quickie Table Wines* (2015), a republication of a booklet first published in 1977, and an essay from my alter ego Molly Wordmaid, *The Wondrous Wacky World of Words*.

You can read more about the books on my website, ben-bennetts.com/books. The books are available as e-books on

www.smashwords.com and in Amazon's Kindle Store.

Contact me at ben@ben-bennetts.com

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