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*Word Clearing Series 67*

**DICTIONARIES**

A DICTIONARY is a book containing the words of a language (or a specific subject) usually arranged in alphabetical order, which gives information about the meanings of the words, their pronunciations, origins, etc.

Dictionaries are vital and important tools in studying or learning any subject. However, current dictionaries vary in accuracy and usefulness and many of these modern dictionaries are virtually useless and can actually confuse a person due to their false and omitted definitions and grammatical and other errors. So the dictionary that a student chooses to use is important and can actually make a difference in his success as a student.

As dictionaries are such an important factor in the learning and application of Scientology (or any subject for that matter) I thought I had better recommend some dictionaries that have been found to be the best of those currently available.

I have also included some additional data on the use of dictionaries in clearing words.

**SOME USEFUL DICTIONARIES**

The following dictionaries are recommended because they have been found to be better, more accurate and more useful than others. No one dictionary was found that would be ideal for all students. The dictionary a student uses is a matter of personal preference and depends to some degree on his vocabulary and level of literacy.

Using the wrong dictionary can make study much harder for a student and greatly extend his time on course. If a student finds he is looking up a lot of words in the definitions he's clearing and that he is getting into long word chains, he should change to a more simple dictionary. An out gradient dictionary can make word clearing and study unnecessarily difficult. For example, „college“ dictionaries are often quite complicated and some students will find themselves spending too much time chasing around the dictionary trying to clear up MUs within the definitions of the words being cleared. This can be time consuming and frustrating.

If you look up „bird“ in a simple beginner's dictionary it says something like „an animal covered with feathers that has two legs and lays eggs“. Now if you look up this same word in a college dictionary it becomes „any warm-blooded vertebrate (animal with a backbone) of the class Aves (latin for 'birds'), having a body covered with feathers and forelimbs (front legs) modified (changed in some way) into wings.“ (The explanations in the brackets of course are not included in the dictionary definition. They have been added here so that one can easily un-

derstand that presentation of the definition of „bird“.) This would likely lead a student into the definitions of „vertebrate“, „Aves“, „forelimbs“ and „modified“. After a bit of this the student is slumped on the table with 45 words to look up that he has never heard of before. The answer is to take away his „college“ dictionary and give him a more simple dictionary and he'll begin to make some progress.

On the other hand, some students would do just fine with the more advanced dictionaries and would find the additional data helpful.

From the dictionaries recommended here a student should be able to find one that suits him and his vocabulary. (Note: If the dictionary a student chooses does not contain derivations then after clearing the word in that dictionary he should consult a larger dictionary to clear the derivation. Some of the better simple dictionaries unfortunately do not contain the derivations of the words.)

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### **Webster's New World Dictionary for Young Readers:**

This is a very simple American dictionary. It is published by William Collins. It is a hardbound volume and does not contain derivations. When using this dictionary a student must be sure to clear the derivations in a larger dictionary. The definitions in this dictionary are quite good.

### **Oxford American Dictionary:**

This is a very good American dictionary, simpler than the college dictionaries yet more advanced than the beginning dictionary listed above. It does not list derivations of the words. It is quite an excellent dictionary and very popular with students who want to use an intermediate dictionary.

It is published in paperback by Avon Books, a division of the Hearst Corporation, 959 Eighth Ave., New York, New York, 10019, and in hardback by Oxford University Press, New York.

### **The Random House College Dictionary Revised Edition:**

This is a college dictionary and somewhat of a higher gradient than the dictionaries listed above. This is a one volume American dictionary published in the US by Random House Inc., New York and in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

This Random House dictionary contains a large number of slang definitions and idioms and also gives good derivations.

### **The Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language College Edition:**

This is an American college dictionary published by Simon and Schuster of New York. It is a one volume dictionary and gives most of the slang definitions and idioms. It also has good derivations.

### **Funk and Wagnalls New Comprehensive Dictionary of the**

**English Language International Edition:**

This dictionary has been previously published as the *Britannica World Language Edition of Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary* (published by Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., Chicago) and then the *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language International Edition* (published by J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co. Chicago). It is currently available from the Publishers International Press under the name *Funk and Wagnalls New Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language Edition*. Publishers International Press is located in New York City at 9 Madison Ave. and in Los Angeles at 1543 West Olympic Blvd., 90015. (This most recent edition is sold by the Publishers International Press, not in bookstores, and can be obtained by writing or calling the above locations.)

This is one of the most grammatically correct dictionaries there is and it is probably the best American dictionary available. It is a two volume set and is a fairly advanced dictionary.

**Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary:**

This is an English dictionary printed in Edinburgh, Scotland. It is quite thorough, containing most of the English idioms and slang. It is a fairly high gradient dictionary however and is recommended for the more literate students. The definitions are quite thorough but few examples are given.

**The Concise Oxford Dictionary:**

This is a very concise English dictionary, but is not a simple or beginner's dictionary. It is a small one volume dictionary. It uses a lot of abbreviations which may take some getting used to, but once the abbreviations are mastered students find this dictionary as easy to use as any other similarly advanced dictionary. It is less complicated in its definitions than the usual college dictionary and has the added benefit that the definitions given are well stated—in other words it does not give the same definition reworded into several different definitions, the way some dictionaries do.

This dictionary is printed in Great Britain and the United States by the Oxford University Press.

**The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary:**

This is a two volume English dictionary and is a shorter version of *The Oxford English Dictionary*. It is quite up-to-date and is an ideal dictionary for fairly literate students. Even if not used regularly it makes a very good reference dictionary. The definitions given in the Oxford dictionaries are usually more accurate and give a better idea of the meaning of the word than any other dictionary.

This Oxford dictionary is also printed by the Oxford University Press.

**The Oxford English Dictionary:**

This is by far the largest English dictionary and is the principal dictionary of the English language. It consists of 12 volumes and several supplementary volumes. (There is a *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* which has the exact text of *The Oxford English Dictionary*—

ary is duplicated in very small print which is read through a magnifying glass. Reduced in this manner the whole thing fits into two volumes.)

For many students this dictionary may be too comprehensive to use on a regular basis. (For some students huge dictionaries can be confusing as the words they use in their definitions are often too big or too rare and make one chase through 20 new words to get the meaning of the original.)

Although many students will not use this as their only dictionary, it is a must for every course room and will be found useful in clearing certain words, verifying data from other dictionaries, etc. It is a valuable reference dictionary and is sometimes the only dictionary that correctly defines a particular word.

These Oxfords are also printed by the Oxford University Press. If your local bookstore does not stock them they will be able to order them for you.

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As a student's vocabulary increases and he becomes more literate, he will often „graduate“ to a more advanced dictionary. This phenomenon of „out-growing“ dictionaries was observed on a pilot course designed to increase a person's level of literacy. As students progressed through the course they switched from a beginner's dictionary to a more advanced dictionary and sooner or later started delving into *The Oxford English Dictionary*. The point is, use as complete and advanced a dictionary as you can without getting in over your head. And don't hesitate to use a simpler one if it's better for you. (Some students have found their study speed greatly increased just by switching to a simpler dictionary.)

(Note: When a student using a simple dictionary has to go to a larger dictionary in order to find a definition he's looking for (but isn't in his dictionary) he would clear that particular definition in the larger dictionary and then go to his simpler dictionary to clear the rest of the definitions of that word. Otherwise he could get in over his head.)

From the dictionaries recommended here a student should be able to find one that suits him. Whatever dictionary one chooses, it should be the correct gradient for him. For instance, you wouldn't give a foreign language student, who barely knows English, the big Oxford to use in his studies!

## DINKY DICTIONARIES

A dinky dictionary is a dictionary that gives you definitions inadequate for a real understanding of the word. Entire definitions are sometimes found to be missing from such dictionaries. „Dinky dictionaries“ are the kind you can fit in your pocket. They are usually paperback and sold at magazine counters in drug stores and grocery stores. Don't use a dinky dictionary.

## DICTIONARIES AND A PERSON'S OWN LANGUAGE

English dictionaries and American dictionaries differ in some of their definitions, as the Americans and English define some words differently. (For example, in an American dictionary we find „pavement“ defined as a hard paved surface, generally referring to a road or a street. In an English dictionary it is defined as a paved footway at the side of the road, which is known in America as a „sidewalk“. So you could get a situation where an American is barreling down the road on a steam roller yelling „Clear the pavement!“ and an Englishman walking

at the side of the road on the sidewalk hears this and thinks he means to get off the „paved footway at the side of the road“ and so he jumps into the road and gets run down! And you'll find that the word „sidewalk“ does not even appear in the English dictionary, yet it is a very common American word.)

An English dictionary will have different applications of words that are specifically British. These usages won't necessarily be found in American dictionaries, as they are not part of the American version of the English language. Different dictionaries have things in them which are unique to that language.

In addition to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* mentioned above is a good example of an English dictionary for the English.

For the most part a student's dictionary should correspond to his own language. This does not mean that an American shouldn't use an English dictionary (or vice versa), but if he does he should be aware of the above and check words in a dictionary of his own language as needed.

## SYNONYMS

In using dictionaries and clearing words you should be aware that one can make the error of „defining“ a word using synonyms.

A *synonym* is a word that means the same or nearly the same as another word in the same language. It is not the definition of the word. Example: defining „fat“ as „portly“, is „defining“ a word using a synonym. Whereas a *definition* of „fat“ would be: „Having much or too much flabby tissue.“

A definition is a precise statement of the real nature of a thing; an exact explanation of the meaning of a word or phrase. A synonym is not a definition.

A student who defines a word as its synonym does not necessarily understand the nuances of that word. The correct handling for this would be for him to *define* the word and use it in sentences until it is understood conceptually.

If a student defines a word in terms of its synonyms only, he will be missing a true understanding of the word.

## FALSE AND OMITTED DEFINITIONS

It has been found that some dictionaries leave out definitions and may even contain false definitions. If, when using a dictionary, a student comes across what he suspects to be a false definition there is a handling that can be done. The first thing would be to ensure there are no misunderstandings in the definition in question and then he should consult another dictionary and check its definition for the word being cleared. This may require more than one dictionary. In this way any false definitions can be resolved.

Other dictionaries, encyclopedias and text books should be on hand for reference.

If a student runs into an omitted definition, or a suspected omitted definition, then other dictionaries or reference books should be consulted and the omitted definition found and cleared.

## DERIVATIONS

A derivation is a statement of the origin of a word.

Words *originated* somewhere and meant something originally. Through ages they have sometimes become altered in meaning.

Derivations are important in getting a full understanding of words. By understanding the origin of a word, one will have a far greater grasp of the concept of that word. Students find that they are greatly assisted in understanding a word fully and conceptually if they know the word's derivation.

A student must always clear the derivation of any word he looks up.

It will commonly be found that a student does not know how to read the derivations of the words in most dictionaries. The most common error they make is not understanding that when there is a word in the derivation which is fully capitalized it means that that word appears elsewhere in the dictionary and probably contains more information about the derivation. (For example, the derivation of „thermometer“ is given in one dictionary as „THERMO + METER“. Looking at the derivation of „thermo“ it says it is a combined form of the Greek *thermos*, meaning hot and *therme*, meaning heat. And the derivation of „meter“ is given as coming from the French *metre*, which is from the Greek *metron*, meaning *measure*.) By understanding and using these fully capitalized words a student can get a full picture of a word's derivation.

If a student has trouble with derivations it is most likely because of the above plus a misunderstood word or symbol in the derivation. These points can be cleared up quite easily where they are giving difficulty.

An excellent dictionary of derivations is The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, also printed by the Oxford University Press.

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We have long known the importance of clearing words and it stands to reason that the dictionary one uses to do this would also be quite important.

I trust this data will be of use.

L. RON HUBBARD  
FOUNDER

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