

SPOTLIGHT

Commentary: A Former Member Speaks Out

Leaving Scientology — Exit or Detour?

Special to The ADVISOR
by Andrea Schwartz

Whether or not one is a Scientologist has more to do with how one views oneself rather than with a designated status given by the organization. For to be a Scientologist is a personal statement of who you are and how you interact with the world around you. The degree of commitment is proportional to the magnitude of one's exposure to L. Ron Hubbard's (founder) philosophy and teaching, one's tenure as a contracted staff member in service to Scientology, and/or the extent of one's participation in the practice of Scientology. The personality transformation one undergoes is subtle to the member, in spite of his obvious metamorphosis to friends and loved ones.

The Promise

Scientology is a tailor-made religion. In an "off the rack" world, a person enjoys hearing how unique and special his complaints are and responds to being told how "Scientology can handle that!" One perceives himself as a truth seeker and that this religion is just what he has been looking for — "The Way to Happiness." Given the proper push, a member absorbs Hubbard's words based on personal motivation to rid him-

self of the problems he came to Scientology to rectify, rather than based on an acceptance of the validity of the founder's statements and conclusions. The desire to reach a personal resolution keeps a person coming to the indoctrination, working long hours for little remuneration, and accepting premises about people and groups which one has little to no information or interest in, all the while being told what "successes" to expect and what end results will be achieved.

The 'Snap'

Somewhere along the line (and it differs for each individual), a subjective sign that Scientology works becomes apparent to the person, and he snaps. He goes from thinking, "I buy some of this stuff and some of it I don't," to knowing, "This guy, Hubbard, knows what he's talking about." Hubbard is transformed from a smart person into "source" (Scientology's designation of L. Ron Hubbard). The member does not distinguish between a result that stemmed from strong suggestion and one that bears up to objective verification. His preliminary exposure to Scientology concepts prepared him to explain his subjective sign in terms of truth rather than manipulation.

The search for truth is the impetus and the subjective sign becomes the hook. From the outset, terms are re-defined to fit in with the tenets of Scientology. So, when the snapping takes place, the person readily accepts his true nature as a "thetan" (Hubbard's explanation of personal identity in terms of something without any substance, location, or time frame) and his possession of a "reactive mind" (Hubbard's determination of the source of man's troubles being this part of the mind which houses all the deterrents to happiness, health, and success). Such a complete change

is accomplished that, should a person find himself out of Scientology, for whatever reason, without the benefit of examining the thought reform that occurred, he ends up in the midst of a frightening, dangerous world with a Hubbardized view of who are the good guys and who are the bad guys, unaware that these conclusions stem from Hubbard and not from his "own knowingness."

Leavers' Problem

For example: A Scientologist is told that "suppressives" (re-defined Scientology term for persons possessing evil and hateful intentions and who carry them out) are responsible for most of the world's upsets and wars and that they are, in fact, the very people opposed to Scientology flourishing. He is also told that "potential trouble sources" are those people who are influenced by these suppressives and that because of this influence, they are leading desperate lives and are a source of trouble to themselves and those around them. Hubbard says that 20% of the population are suppressives, and that of the 20%, 2% are truly dangerous. Rather than leave it up to the Scientologists to determine who is and who isn't a suppres-

sive, Hubbard has been so gracious as to name the groups with the highest concentration.

The government is full of suppressives; which easily explains why the FBI and CIA are constantly looking to harass Scientology. The psychiatric and psychological professions are threatened by the obvious success of Scientology in the field of mental health and the menace it poses to do them out of work and are for this reason actively engaged in oppressing Scientology. The AMA is devastated at the success of Dianetics, which will ruin its traditional monopoly in the field of healing. Journalists are always looking to understate good things and thrive on reporting "bad news." Thus, they fabricate bad things to say about Scientology. And, Judeo-Christian clergy are merely speaking out of the framework of their own reactive minds and cannot see the superiority and authenticity of the truths in Scientology.

Who, then, does the exiting Scientologist go to for explanation or discernment regarding Scientology? At best, he feels that the groups just noted are made up of misguided people connected to suppressives. At worst, he considers them to be the cause of all the world's troubles. It is noteworthy that many members "leave the Church" because of its corruption and manipulation without ever giving up their identity as Scientologists. The general population misconstrues leaving the organization with relinquishing the ideology, and, many times, that is not the case.

The ex-member often embarks on a personal crusade to make Scientology work on a grass roots level. Even as they relate to his own personal life, his job, or his social contacts, he still views things with his mental set from Scientology. He faces the dilemma of making Scien-

tology work out in the real world and often falls short of his own expectations. Rather than question the 'givens' of Scientology, he assumes that he is failing due to his own evil nature and bad deeds against Hubbard and the organization. (This conclusion stems from the technology he had instilled in him while a practicing member.) Since the only true good guys are Scientologists (despite his personal experience with members and practices he does not like or agree with) he is vulnerable to any contact the Church makes to him and re-entry is always possible. Since the hook had to do with specifics in his life, a re-occurrence of circumstances might be what it takes to kick in the programming and lead to his return.

Viet Nam Analogy

For the sake of seeing this apart from the Scientology framework, I offer this analogy:

Picture war torn Vietnam. A young child finds herself separated from her family, without adequate clothing and shelter, and very hungry and scared. She wanders for days trying to find a secure place where she will be met with comfort and aid. Unaware of whose company she is entering, she finds her-

way to a Viet-Cong camp where she is provided with food, clothing, shelter, and comfort. She feels she had found what she's been looking for. She then becomes assimilated into the group and is told who are friends and who are enemies. Based on her experience with this group, she has no reason to doubt them. She then becomes schooled on how to steal for her food; thwart the enemy's attempts to hurt her; and how to deliver severe, if not fatal, blows to the opponents of the group. She experiences these things along with the friendship and possible love she receives from those around her.

Let's assume now that the war is over or, at least, she finds herself out of the conflict. To her and even outside observers, she is 'out of the war.' However, faced with circumstances where she needs to decide whom to trust and who not to, how to secure her needs and how to identify friend or foe, she only has access to that which became her mental set on how to survive. If no other input has been added, her determination of who is good and who is bad is based on her experience and the information she received from those on whom she depended and trusted.

Returning to the 'ex-Scientologist' who finds himself 'out of Scientology,' we see some obvious points of comparison. In his case, knowledgeable intervention is important to help him achieve a sense of understanding of what he was made to believe and act upon, and for what purpose. A means which is successful at accomplishing this involves showing the ex-member a panorama of Scientology, including: the discrepancies between Hubbard's published and actual biographies; the criminal history of the Church, demonstrating its divergence

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from its own stated aims and purposes; the obvious absence of inspection and scrutiny available to members which, in fact, is justified throughout the fabric of Hubbard's technology; the difference between the actual results of Scientology (cases where individuals were damaged) and the results that Scientology publicizes; the internal directives stemming from Hubbard and the highest Church officials to suppress the truth and eradicate any opposition; and finally, the specifics of Thought Reform and how Scientology fits into the pattern closely.

The complete picture enables the individual to shed the identity, morality, and ideology of a Scientologist, all fabricated by Hubbard to subjugate people. The person can recover and pick up where he left off or begin from a new starting point, and often discovers that the good he experienced in Scientology can be enjoyed more fully with his regained freedom. Life after Scientology can be fulfilling and rewarding providing it is truly after and not as a Scientologist.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The author of this article was expelled from the Church of Scientology in 1977 along with her husband. In 1980, both were recruited once again and carried out undercover intelligence operations for and under the jurisdiction of Scientology. She remained a Scientologist until her deprogramming in 1982 and uses her own experiences, along with those of others with whom she has worked, in the preparation of this paper. □*