

An Endless Controversy: L. Ron Hubbard’s “Affirmations”

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ABSTRACT: During a court case in 1984, disgruntled ex-Scientologist Gerry Armstrong mentioned a document nicknamed “Affirmations,” including several handwritten notes by L. Ron Hubbard he had bound together while working at a biography of Scientology’s founder to be written by British author Omar Garrison. Armstrong claimed these were “commands” Hubbard had written to himself for experiments in self-hypnosis. The document as such disappeared, but portions had been read into the court record. A new, allegedly complete, text was published by Armstrong in 2000, and was quoted by journalists and scholars as a significant document for understanding Hubbard’s early ideas. The article argues that the 2000 text is, in all likelihood, false, and that the scarce portions that surfaced earlier are neither surely authentic nor particularly significant for an assessment of Hubbard and Scientology.

KEYWORDS: L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology, Dianetics, “Affirmations” (L. Ron Hubbard), Gerry Armstrong, Omar Garrison.

Introduction

One of the most bizarre documents attributed to L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), the founder of Scientology, is commonly known as the “Affirmations.” It has its own entry on Wikipedia, where it is described as “widely believed to have been written by L. Ron Hubbard” (Wikipedia 2021). Militant anti-Scientologist Gerry Armstrong wrote in 2000 that

Admissions are quite obviously a part of \$cientology’s [sic: Armstrong writes “Scientology” with the dollar symbol for obvious derogatory purposes] ‘scriptures.’ On the holiness scale®, they are holier than the holiest of the Advanced Technology scriptures (Armstrong 2000).

Scholar Hugh Urban called them “one of the most important documents for making sense of the [...] occult roots of Scientology” (Urban 2012, 100). Anti-Scientology journalist Tony Ortega reported that it was in fact Urban who “encouraged us to publish some of L. Ron Hubbard’s infamous ‘Affirmations’ while we were at the *Village Voice*” (Ortega 2017).

Urban’s interest in the “Affirmations” is that they may confirm his theory that Hubbard was influenced by Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), the British magus who became the leader of the occult order Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). Whether Hubbard ever formally became a member of the O.T.O. is doubtful, and was later denied by both Sarah Elizabeth “Betty” Northrup (1924–1997), Hubbard’s one-time wife, and by science fiction author Alva Rogers (1923–1982), who were both part of the circle in California gathered around scientist and O.T.O. initiate John Whiteside (“Jack”) Parsons (1914–1952) in the years when Hubbard befriended him and lived in his house (Rogers 1982; Hollister 1997). On the other hand, Parsons made it clear that he regarded Hubbard as a trusted co-worker in the magical activities of his lodge (Bogdan 2016). Why exactly Hubbard became involved in Parsons’ occult endeavors is a matter of controversy, and one I discussed at length in a study of Hubbard’s relationships with magic (Introvigne 2019).

I did not quote the “Affirmations” in my article, since I believed that by 2019, it was obvious, at least to scholars, that their most often quoted text was a fake document. I was wrong. Urban politely entered a Facebook discussion about my study and declared itself “baffled by the fact that it does not even mention the key ‘Affirmations’ text (circa 1946–47) which is widely believed to be Hubbard’s.” This persuaded me that reconstructing the whole story of the so-called “Affirmations” was worth the while.

A Sordid Story

The lengthy tale of the “Affirmations” starts with one Gerald “Gerry” Armstrong. A Canadian citizen, he joined Scientology in Vancouver in 1969. He became a de facto employee of L. Ron Hubbard and/or the Church of Scientology in 1971, and a legal resident of the U.S. in 1977 (Armstrong 2004). Armstrong worked for Scientology as a middle-level employee, although he later promoted himself in Russia to “former personal secretary to L. Ron Hubbard”

(Filippov 2011), a position he never held. Part of Armstrong's job was to collect documents for an authorized biography of L. Ron Hubbard, to be written by Omar V. Garrison, a British professional writer. Armstrong later claimed he suggested the idea of a biography to Hubbard, and Hubbard approved it.

Armstrong was not the first, nor the last, Scientologist who decided to leave the Church and become its militant opponent. He did so in December 1981. What was less common, however, is that he exited the Church taking with him 21 boxes including copies (and perhaps originals) of more than 10,000 documents and papers by and about Hubbard, which had been prepared for the proposed biography and he had given to Garrison for that purpose. Armstrong recovered the boxes from Garrison and gave it to his lawyer, Michael J. Flynn, a militant anti-Scientologist himself.

Not unexpectedly, Scientology sued for recovering the documents. On behalf of his clients, Flynn raised as a defense that taking the documents was necessary to protect Armstrong and his wife from harassment by Scientology once he had left the Church and started publicly criticizing it. The case was heard by the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Los Angeles from April 19 to June 8, 1984, before Judge Paul G. Breckenridge, Jr.

During the case, Armstrong had to prove that some of the documents he had given to Flynn could work as his "insurance" against possible retaliation, as they were really detrimental to Scientology. Among the documents that Armstrong declared would be, if disclosed, highly damaging for the reputation of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology, he mentioned the

Affirmations [which] were handwritten materials, handwritten by L. Ron Hubbard, which went over various of his problems, and they were self-hypnotic commands that he was writing to himself, affirmations (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, V, 793–94).

Armstrong explained he had bound together different handwritten notes by Hubbard and had given them to Garrison (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, V, 794). The latter testified, "I was the one that gave it that designation. The word 'Affirmation' doesn't appear on any of it" (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XXI, 3652). Armstrong expressed as his "opinion" that the notes he assembled dated back to "the period of 1946–1947" (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XII, 1928).

By reading the transcript, it is difficult not to conclude that Judge Breckenridge was extremely prejudiced against Scientology. In its “Memorandum of Intended Decision” filed on June 22, 1984, he called Scientology a “schizophrenic and paranoid” cult (Breckenridge 1984, 8). He accepted Armstrong’s defense, although he also indicated that the documents, or most of them, should eventually be “returned to the plaintiff,” i.e. to the Church of Scientology (Breckenridge 1984, 12).

Appeals and other legal actions were filed, and on December 6, 1986, the Church of Scientology International and Armstrong signed a settlement, which later became an exhibit in other cases, thus becoming publicly available. Scientology paid to Armstrong \$ 800,000 (Court of Appeal, First District, Division 4, California 2005; reportedly, \$ 300,000 went to his lawyer), and Armstrong agreed to maintain in the future “strict confidentiality and silence with respect to his experiences with the Church of Scientology and any knowledge or information he may have concerning the Church of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, or any of the organizations, individuals and entities” associated with Hubbard and Scientology. Armstrong also agreed to return to Scientology several documents, including “all originals and copies of documents commonly known as the ‘Affirmations’ written by L. Ron Hubbard” (“Mutual Release of All Claims and Settlement Agreement” 2016).

By his own admission in articles published in his Web site, Armstrong breached the agreement hundreds of times, lost several court cases for this reason, and a warrant for arrest was issued against him in California (see e.g. Armstrong 2014).

In particular, Armstrong admitted having helped those who wrote the most significant anti-Scientology books in the 1980s and 1990s (Armstrong 2004). These included the Danish-born American journalist Bent Corydon and British journalist Russell Miller. Corydon listed as his co-author one of Hubbard’s sons, L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., also known as Ronald Edward DeWolf (1934–1991), although the latter in a sworn affidavit dated May 20, 1987, claimed he had never authorized such use of his name. He added that,

my communications to Bent Corydon and others, were simply no more than wild flights of fantasy based on my own unlimited imagination. To now represent those statements as “truth,” and to steal the hard-earned value of the name “L. Ron Hubbard” by using my

former name as the co-author of a book I have neither written nor reviewed, is an unethical act of the highest magnitude (DeWolf 1987).

Both Corydon and Miller mentioned the "Affirmations" and quoted from their alleged text in their books (Miller 1987, 132; Corydon and Hubbard 1987, 53).

On March 11, 2000, Armstrong announced to the anti-Scientology Usenet group alt.religion.scientology that an anonymous correspondent "in this recent period sent me the copy from which I typed that follows," i.e. a full text of the "Affirmations." He published these "Affirmations" and reiterated his claim that they were part of Scientology's "scriptures," indeed one of the most important texts in the whole Scientology canon. He stated he believed the text he received from the anonymous was "within reasonable parameters, authentic" and that he was "posting the Admissions openly to confirm their authenticity." He hoped that disgruntled ex-Scientists "Robert Vaughn Young [1938–2003] and Stacy Brooks," who allegedly had read the document mentioned in the 1984 case, could come forward and confirm the text was genuine (Armstrong 2000). To the best of my knowledge, they didn't.

In 2008, Michael Snoeck, an independent admirer of L. Ron Hubbard not associated with the Church of Scientology, published a study of Armstrong's 2000 text, concluding that it was a hoax. Armstrong answered by insulting Snoeck and calling him an agent of Scientology (Snoeck 2008). Another independent ex-Scientologist, "Bernie," also argued that Armstrong had written himself the text of the "Affirmations" he published in 2000 ("Bernie" 2008; "Bernie" 2009).

Armstrong continues a career as a professional anti-Scientologist, having accepted (at least) \$ 500,000 in 1986 against his promise *not* to do it. Among his most unsavory activities is his public support of the Russian campaign of persecution against Scientology, a campaign denounced as a violation of the most basic human rights by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the European Court of Human Rights (Kravchenko 2018; European Court of Human Rights 2015; USCIRF 2020). In 2014, he wrote to President Vladimir Putin, praising his anti-American pronouncements and inciting him to crack down even more mercilessly on Scientology (Armstrong 2014). In 2011, Armstrong lectured in Moscow and accused Scientists of providing information to "America's intelligence agencies (FBI and CIA)" (Filippov 2011), certainly not ignoring that this could support accusations of espionage on behalf

of the U.S. against Russian Scientologists, a crime for which the life imprisonment can be imposed.

What Are the “Affirmations”?

To start with, there are no “Affirmations.” This is a fancy name (later replaced, in the jargon of Scientology critics, by “Admissions”) Omar Garrison gave to the content of what Armstrong’s attorney Michael Flynn described in 1984 as “a rudimentary item like a PC folder” (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XXVIII, 4871). The folder included what Armstrong claimed were notes handwritten by L. Ron Hubbard he had selected and assembled together. Flynn stated very clearly that “the original binder was created by Mr. Armstrong” (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XI, 1984).

In fact, what has often eluded both critics and scholars, is that there are *different* documents called “Affirmations” by the opponents of Scientology. They are not the same, and include:

(a) what we can call the “urtext” of the “Affirmations,” i.e. the binder created by Armstrong by assembling what he claimed were separated handwritten notes written by Hubbard between 1946 and 1947 and shown to various people and to the court in 1984 (AFF-81);

(b) the portions of the “Affirmations” read either by Armstrong (220 words) or by his lawyer Michael Flynn (26 words) into the court transcript during the 1984 Los Angeles case (AFF-84);

(c) the portions of the “Affirmations” somebody (presumably Armstrong) sent to the authors of the anti-Scientology books published in 1987 by Russell Miller (144 words) and Bent Corydon (25 words) (AFF-87);

(d) the text Armstrong claimed to have received from an anonymous, and published, in 2000 (9,086 words) (AFF-2000).

What follows is an analysis of these four sets.

The "Urtext" of the "Affirmations" (AFF-81, 1981–82)

Historians of literature, and of religions, use the word "Urtext" to designate a lost text, of which only subsequent reduced versions or quotes are available. For instance, theologians have called "Q" (*Quelle*, "source" in German) a supposed original and older text that might have formed the basis for the three synoptic Christian Gospels. As one of my professors at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University used to tell over-zealous students, it is always important to remember that Q and other urtexts *do not exist*. They are *hypothetical* texts, tools useful for certain purposes, on whose existence, not to mention content, we can only speculate.

What do we know for certain about AFF-81? We know that Armstrong produced to the Los Angeles Court in 1984 a folder where he had bound together what he claimed were handwritten notes by L. Ron Hubbard dating back to the years 1946 and 1947. He claimed he had shown the folder to several people.

It is generally argued that AFF-81 existed, since the judge saw it, Scientology's lawyers saw it and did not challenge its authenticity, objecting only that its content should not be read in court due to its confidential and private nature. Another argument in favor of the existence and authenticity of AFF-81 is that, in the 1986 settlement with Armstrong, Scientology included the provision that it should get back "all originals and copies of documents commonly known as the 'Affirmations' written by L. Ron Hubbard."

We may thus accept that a binder existed. It does not exist anymore. Armstrong claims he has not had access to it for years (Armstrong 2000). In preparations for this article, I contacted the Church of Scientology, and they assured me that "we simply don't have them." Critics may object that of course Scientology would not admit having in his archives documents detrimental to Hubbard's reputation. But, if Scientology was as malicious as its opponents believe it is, it could simply have produced a transcript alternative to the one Armstrong published in 2000, claiming that the handwritten notes are lost but a transcript is still available. A possibility is that, among the more than 10,000 documents Armstrong returned to Scientology, the famous folder was either absent or subsequently got lost. Be it as it may be, we have no ways of knowing.

Assuming the document was what Armstrong said it was, it would be at best half-genuine, or half-false. Copyright lawyers know that you can produce a document that is technically false by assembling original pieces. For example, you can get hold of a treasure trove of thousands of pages of handwritten notes by a famous poet, everything from uncompleted poems to grocery lists and notes preparing a meeting with a lawyer. All these documents are handwritten by the poet and “genuine.” However, if you arbitrarily assemble six or seven of them, give them a title, and claim they are a representative work by the poet, you create a false document, although one based on original raw material.

This is what Armstrong, if we take his story at face value, did in the early 1980s. He picked up some notes by Hubbard, assembled them together, and claimed they were a coherent and all-important document. But, even assuming the raw material was genuine, the assemblage was Armstrong’s.

Finally, few have asked the question why, if these were, as Armstrong has repeatedly argued the most secret texts Hubbard ever wrote, he included them in the boxes he gave to Armstrong for the preparation of his intended biography in the first place.

The Text Quoted in Court (AFF-84, 1984)

In 1984, Armstrong, against the objections by Scientology’s lawyers, read the following alleged portions of the “Affirmations” into the records of the Los Angeles Court:

[By hypnosis I must be convinced as follows]

Your stomach trouble you used as an excuse to keep the Navy from punishing you. You are free of the Navy. You have no further reason to have a weak stomach.

Your ulcers are all well and never bother you. You can eat anything.

Your hip is a pose. You have a sound hip. It never hurts.

Your shoulder never hurts.

Your foot was an alibi. The injury is no longer needed. It is well. You have perfect and lovely feet.

Your sinus trouble is nothing. It is not dangerous. It will vanish. The common cold amuses you. You are protected from further illness. Your cat fever has vanished forever and will never return. You do not have malaria.

When you tell people you are ill, it has no effect upon your health. And in Veterans Administration examinations you'll tell them how sick you are; you'll look sick when you take it; you'll return to health one hour after the examination and laugh at them.

No matter what lies you may tell others, they have no physical effect on you of any kind. You never injure your health by saying it is bad. You cannot lie to yourself.

...That my eyes (which I used as an excuse to get out of school) are perfect and do not pain me ever (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XII, 1925–26).

Armstrong's lawyer, Michael Flynn, added three other sentences:

Men are your slaves.

Elemental spirits are your slaves.

You can be merciless whenever your will is crossed and you have the right to be merciless (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XIII, 2056–57).

There is no record that specific exams were performed to confirm that the handwriting was Hubbard's. Urban believes that the fact that Scientology's attorneys objected based on the private nature of the text, not of its authenticity, confirms that the quotes were authentic, and this was further confirmed by the stipulation in the 1986 settlement that Armstrong should give the folder back to Scientology (Urban 2012, 100). This is a possible argument, but in my opinion not a very strong one. As for the folder, we don't know what it exactly included. And privacy and confidentiality probably seemed stronger arguments on which to base an objection to Scientology's lawyers during the trial.

The lawyers did not limit themselves to confidentiality, however. They insisted that the documents, if one accepted them at face value, had been prepared by Hubbard for an experiment of "hypnosis" (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, XII, 1927) and that nobody would regard tools prepared for self-hypnosis as factual statements. Armstrong himself had introduced Hubbard's notes to the Court explaining that they "were self-hypnotic commands that he was writing to himself, affirmations" (Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles 1984, V, 793–94).

It is well possible that Armstrong and Garrison took the name "affirmations" from the then famous book by Napoleon Hill (1883–1970), *Think and Grow Rich* (Hill 1937). Indeed, "affirmations" are still used today by practitioners of self-hypnosis. Garrison and Armstrong later tried to change the name to "Admissions," but "Affirmations" stuck. Perhaps they realized that, by using the

label “Affirmations,” they were destroying their claim that Hubbard was admitting shameful details of his life, or uttering grandiose claims such “all men are my slaves.”

“Affirmations,” in fact, as the academic literature on self-hypnosis has clarified, are part of “the field of the imaginary” (Mubiri, Richard and Bioy 2015, 116). Almost anything can serve as an “affirmation.” Self-hypnosis can be achieved by expressing fears, hopes, fantasies, fictional stories. Thousands of readers of *Think and Grow Rich* used as “affirmations” sentences such as “I have one million dollars in the bank.” They would have been surprised if a tax collector had knocked at their door asking to tax the amount. Affirmations are *imaginary* statements, and taking them as factual simply does not make sense. For all we know, assuming again the quotes are genuine, Hubbard might have written down events connected to an imaginary “double” of himself, or may even have been impersonating a character of one of his novels.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Introvigne 2017), Hubbard ultimately concluded that hypnosis was not useful and may actually be dangerous and unethical. Dianetics would offer all the purported benefits of hypnosis, minus the side effects and dangers. However, there is little doubt that he came to this conclusion based on a serious and in-depth study of hypnosis. Experiments with self-hypnosis might well have been a part of it.

Quotes in 1987 Anti-Scientology Books (AFF-87)

In 1987, as mentioned earlier, two anti-Scientology books included quotes that were allegedly part of the “Affirmations.” Russell Miller had the longer text:

Your ulcers are all well and never bother you. You can eat anything.

You have a sound hip. It never hurts.

Your shoulder never hurts.

Your sinus trouble is nothing.

The injury is no longer needed. It is well. You have perfect and lovely feet. [...]

Men are your slaves.

You can be merciless whenever your will is crossed and you have the right to be merciless. [...]

When you tell people you are ill, it has no effect upon your health. And in Veterans Administration examinations you'll tell them how sick you are; you'll look sick when you take it; you'll return to health one hour after the examination and laugh at them.

No matter what lies you may tell others, they have no physical effect on you of any kind. You never injured your health by saying it is bad. You cannot lie to yourself (Miller 1987, 132).

This text does not add anything to AFF-84. Miller slightly revised the English but basically reproduced quotes read in court in 1984. Corydon, however, did add something:

All men shall be my slaves!

All women shall succumb to my charms!

All mankind shall grovel at my feet and not know why! (Corydon and Hubbard 1987, 53).

The sentence "All men shall be my slaves!" is a variation of "Men are your slaves" in AFF-84. However, the other two sentences are not in AFF-84—curiously, they are not in AFF-2000 either. We have no way of knowing where they come from. Corydon implied that he got them from Ron DeWolf but, as we have seen, the latter would not vouch for any sentence or information in Corydon's book. The best guess is that they came from Armstrong, who perhaps just supplied AFF-84 and left for Corydon the task of embellishing some sentences.

Text Sent by an Anonymous to Armstrong (AFF-2000, 2000)

AFF 4 is a voluminous document of more than 9,000 words. It is also a fantastic text. Whoever wrote it was wise enough to incorporate AFF-84 into it. Urban believes that this document reflects the knowledge of Crowley's system Hubbard had acquired through Jack Parsons (Urban 2012, 100–1). I am not persuaded. The author of AFF-2000 shows only a limited, almost stereotypical knowledge of Enochian and Thelemic magic. As Bogdan (2016) demonstrated, Parsons, no amateur himself, held Hubbard's grasp of magic in high regard, and was even willing to accept his suggestions and instructions. Again, why Hubbard decided to play Parsons' game is a different matter altogether. But I doubt Hubbard would have written such poor statements connected to Crowley's and Parson's system, not to mention the semi-pornographic fantasies that also pop up in AFF-2000.

The debate about the *content* of AFF-2000, however, is one I am not very interested in. We are so far away from having even the slightest evidence that AFF-2000 is a genuine Hubbard text that any such debate is, at best, premature. All we have for AFF-2000 is Armstrong's claim that he received it from an anonymous correspondent. He announced on March 11, 2000, that,

By the time the Admissions are posted to the internet, I will have, pursuant to the wishes of the person who made it, destroyed the copy I received (Armstrong 2000).

So, presumably this copy has been destroyed and nobody is in a position to check it.

We can, of course, speculate that Armstrong's correspondent did not exist, and he wrote AFF-2000 himself. This is well possible, but if he had in his possession the handwritten notes by Hubbard that he allegedly bound together in 1981–82 he could have produced them in 2000. The argument that, by doing so, he would have admitted that he had breached the 1986 agreement by keeping a copy of the notes, and opened himself to further litigation, is not persuasive. By 2000, Armstrong had breached the agreement so many times that one more would hardly have made a difference. On the other hand, producing *something* in Hubbard's original handwriting *would* have made a difference, and silenced his critics.

If an anonymous really sent AFF-2000 to Armstrong, we have every right to treat it as a hoax. If Armstrong wrote it, it is of interest only to some hypothetical future scholar who would have nothing better to do than studying Armstrong's prose.

Armstrong read my exchange with Urban on Facebook and wrote a lengthy article to answer the few paragraphs I had written as social media comments. Apart from the usual "argument" with which he routinely dismisses all his critics (they are hired guns for Scientology), Armstrong basically makes three claims for the authenticity of AFF-2000. The first, and most important, one is that

Introvigne asks, "How can we know that the 2000 text is the same as the 1984 one?"

The short answer is because I say it is (Armstrong 2019).

This would not deserve a comment. As mentioned earlier, Armstrong's Russian adventures would be more than enough to cast serious doubts on his personal integrity. But even somebody holding Armstrong in high regard could not be satisfied by the "Because I say so" argument.

Second, Armstrong claims that a fabricator of AFF-2000

would have to possess intimate, detailed knowledge of Hubbard's history, occult interests, writings, thought and ideas. The fabricator would have to apply that intimate knowledge to produce words, phrases and concepts in Hubbard's styles (Armstrong 2019).

I disagree on the point that AFF-2000 is written in typical Hubbard style. More importantly, however, a look at the closest mirror would easily reveal to Armstrong who such a "fabricator" may be. There is little doubt that he has been obsessed by Hubbard for most of his life and, for his own oppositional purposes, has gained an "intimate knowledge" of his life and work.

Third, Armstrong mentions that Mark Rathbun quotes portions of AFF-2000 in his *Memoirs of a Scientology Warrior* (Rathbun 2013). The argument has been used before, but the reference would be relevant only if Rathbun had written his book *before* 2000. After that date, any "reminiscence" of AFF-81 by both Scientologists and anti-Scientologists would unavoidably be tainted and compromised by the easy availability of AFF-2000.

Conclusion: Non Sequiturs

Urban's 2012 article is, I believe, a good example of how journalists and even respected scholars were misled by Armstrong. Urban uses the following argument to conclude that the "Affirmations" are authentic:

No church official has ever publicly denied that "Affirmations" is an authentic Hubbard document, and Scientology's own legal position indicates that it does consider the document to be church property and clearly wants to keep control of the text. According to a mutual release and settlement agreement between the Church of Scientology of California and former member Gerald Armstrong in 1986, Armstrong agreed to return a number of confidential documents to the church, including all copies of Hubbard's "Excalibur manuscript" and "all originals and copies of documents commonly known as the 'Affirmations' written by L. Ron Hubbard." Here the church clearly indicates that the text was written by L. Ron Hubbard, and it is difficult to understand why the church would file suit to retain ownership of the text were it not an authentic document (Urban 2012, 100).

He also mentions that in the 1984 Los Angeles case, Mary Sue Whipp Hubbard (1931–2002), the third wife of the founder of Scientology, who intervened in the case and was represented by her own lawyer, objected to reading the documents

for their very private character, but did not argue they were false (Urban 2012, 100). Not much can be inferred from this since, when Hubbard allegedly wrote the notes, Mary Sue was 15 years old and would only meet Hubbard six years later. Somebody can object that she was following instructions by Hubbard, but there is no evidence for this.

The main problem, however, is another. Having argued for the authenticity of the “Affirmations” based on statements of 1984 and 1986, Urban proceeds to discuss several passages of them that, in his opinion, confirm the deep influence by Crowley on Hubbard. However, the passages he quotes are taken from AFF-2000, a document published *in the year 2000*. His arguments may refer to the existence of AFF-81, which nobody denies (but nobody knows its content or can guarantee its authenticity either), or to the court quotes of AFF-84. But in Urban’s article, statements in the court case of 1984 and the settlement of 1986 are used to authenticate AFF-2000, a text nobody had seen before 2000. Certainly, Urban does not want to imply that, by signing the settlement, in 1986, Scientology was preventively authenticating a text Armstrong would publish fourteen years later. In a simpler way, the same scheme is followed by the Wikipedia article (Wikipedia 2021). It claims that Scientology admitted the existence and Hubbard’s authorship of AFF-81 and then proceed to offer a detailed summary of AFF-2000. But there is no evidence whatsoever that AFF-2000 is the same document Armstrong showed to the court as AFF-81, and Armstrong himself has admitted he cannot conclusively prove it (Armstrong 2000).

What we are left with is AFF-84, whose authenticity claims rest on the argument that the lawyers for Scientology in 1984, did not object to it arguing it was false, and in 1986, asked to receive back all “documents commonly known as the ‘Affirmations’ written by L. Ron Hubbard.” There are many valid legal reasons why the lawyers did not base their objections on non-authenticity, and certainly any self-respecting lawyer would have advised Scientology, which paid Armstrong and Flynn \$ 800,000, to get back *everything* Armstrong mentioned in the trial or had in his possession that was remotely, really, or allegedly connected to Hubbard. Additionally, the fact that in the text of the settlement there is no comma after the word “Affirmations” means, in good English, that the documents referred to are “commonly known” as “the ‘Affirmations’ written by L. Ron Hubbard,” not that the settlement *asserts* that they are “written by L. Ron

Hubbard.” The settlement simply represented what the common opinion was, without taking a position on whether this opinion was true or false.

Even if the sentences of AFF-84 come from notes handwritten by Hubbard as tools or cards for experiments in self-hypnosis, as Armstrong argued, they do not prove anything about Hubbard’s early life, let alone about Dianetics and Scientology. Self-hypnosis affirmations are, by their very nature, imaginary statements. They might have referred to imaginary lives Hubbard might have lived, but didn’t.

Calling it “part of Scientology’s scriptures” is simply ridiculous. Even Hubbard’s early fiction, which is more important than any self-hypnosis card to understand his early studies and concerns, is not “part of Scientology’s scriptures.” The latter include only the texts Hubbard wrote to expound and teach the technology of Dianetics and Scientology. Surely, personal handwritten notes of 1946 or 1947 to be used for an experiment on self-hypnosis, even assuming they are genuine, are not “part of Scientology’s scriptures.”

Urban’s claim that they are “one of the most important documents” to understand certain features of Scientology obviously does not refer to the few sentences included in AFF-84. It refers to AFF-2000, but there is no evidence that AFF-2000 is anything more than a fake document written either by Armstrong or another anti-Scientologist, and not even a very bright one.

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