

## The Visible Expansion of the Church of Scientology and Its Actors

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**ABSTRACT:** This report addresses the issue of the current expansion of the Church of Scientology. It is based on field research mostly conducted from 2016 to 2018 in various countries, in Clearwater, and in the Los Angeles area in particular: visits of a great number of missions, churches, office buildings and foundations; interviews with active Scientologists; participation in interfaith meetings. I identified four areas that demonstrate best the expansion of the Church and deserve analysis: 1. The most visible expansion: several examples of real estate acquisitions and renovations are presented as well as their social and symbolic function. 2. How does membership keep pace with such material expansion? 3. The Tech, or the Word of Lafayette Ron Hubbard (LRH) as the source of Scientology: the ever-increasing dissemination activities and the Preservation of the Tech are analyzed as major religious undertakings. 4. The social interactions of the Church through its foundations and its interfaith programs are presented from my own perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, David Miscavige, Scientology Real Estate Renovation, Scientology Church Planting, Scientology Pedagogy, Scientology Demographics, Shrine of the Word, Scientology Golden Age of Knowledge, Scientology Foundations, Nation of Islam, Druzes, Peace Rides.

### *Introduction*

This study of the recent developments of the Church of Scientology was triggered by my hearing that Druzes in the North of Israel were taking Scientology courses. Having spent time among the Druzes of the Chouf in Lebanon, I was most surprised to hear that such an ancient and secretive community, which parceled out rather sparingly the tenets and practices of its religion, could be opened to another world view, one so totally modern and western. I also learned that Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam,

had followed Scientology courses and that several members, including high ranking ones, also did. I had studied the Nation of Islam in the 1980s and knowing their fierce cultural and racial separatism then, I was puzzled by such collaboration. My earlier analysis (2004) of SMI, Scientology Mission International, definitely had to be updated.

The first major step in this direction was the organization with Régis Dericquebourg (who has published extensively on the Church) of an international conference that would bring together specialists of Scientology away from the cult-apologist/anti-cult hysteria. This implied we did not organize it in France, where anti-cultists of all stripes rise up in arms as soon as they hear the mere word “Scientologie” (the homonymy with “sorcellerie” may play some part in this inquisition). We held the Conference “Scientology in Scholarly Perspective” on 24-25 January, 2014, in Antwerp at the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions and Humanism run by Chris Vronck. Several specialists (Peter Åkerbäck, Germana Carobene, Eileen Barker, Liselotte Frisk, J. Gordon Melton, Massimo Introvigne, James Lewis, Susan Palmer, Guillaume Roucoux, Mikael Rothstein, Aldo Natale Terrin, Donald Westbrook) presented specific developments (Dericquebourg and Rigal-Cellard 2017).

I then intensified my visits of various centers of the Church that I had conducted in the past decades and spent several weeks with Scientologists in the USA, first at the spiritual center of the Church, the Flag in Clearwater, Florida, and then at the headquarters in Hollywood where I had conducted most of my research on missions, thanks to then president Heber Jentsch and to Lisa Goodman. I visited at length many facilities, missions, churches, foundations, museums, and interviewed at least twenty-five members in the Los Angeles area in February 2018. Donald Westbrook (2015a, 2018a) and Guillaume Roucoux in France (2019) have based their own analysis of the Church on interviews but my methodology is far less markedly sociological than theirs for as a professor in North American Studies, my approach is that of a “civilisationist.” In my research on religions, I am interested in understanding how new movements relate, materially and symbolically, to the culture conducive to their birth and development, and how they adapt to those societies they try to penetrate via missions: what specific features of the surrounding culture will the founder emphasize or demean and reject in the doctrinal construction? What spiritual

and/or social issues and expectations will be addressed and how? Will the group in turn impact the culture and the territory it has settled in and if so in what ways?

I am interested here in the developments of the Church over the last decades in relation to its environment, first in the USA, then outside, though I have not followed its international expansion in its entirety. I will not make distinctions here between the different acronyms: COS, Church of Scientology; CSI, Church of Scientology International; IAS, International Association of Scientologists, which is the membership organization. I will mostly use the term “Church” or “Scientology” to refer to the institution as a whole, even though I am aware that the two terms are not exactly equivalent.

My interviews lasted each at least one hour; they complemented what I have learned in many casual conversations over more than 20 years. My questions followed the typical questionnaire: how and when had my respondents encountered Scientology? Did they practice a specific religion before, had they retained it? What about their parents, relatives, children? In what field do they work or did work? Did taking courses and being audited impact their job, and if so how? Do they carry out a specific duty within the organization? Do they feel their practice impacts the community in general, and if so in what ways? What major changes had they witnessed in the last 20–30 years, whether they were already with the group or outside?

Since Scientology is greatly about perfecting communication skills, members answer with ease and in some cases respondents told their life story without any prodding (as a rule anyway, life stories flow out much more easily in the USA than in France). I did not venture into sensitive ground, fully aware as I am of the redundant literature on touchy issues. I did not interview ex-members nor anti-cultists either, my interest lying elsewhere. I will not claim that the people I interviewed were sociologically representative of all the membership: I met them through appointments or by chance encounters, but never in random locations; it was always in missions, churches or at CC, Celebrity Centres, so that, by definition, they were active Scientologists, all intensely involved in various strata of the institution or in connected foundations. All had been in the Church for decades. For lack of space, I have not been able to quote all the interviewees.

I will not pretend either that I observed the Church from the inside, which in any case is not possible unless one actually signs up for many auditing sessions and seminars; the complex issue of “getting to the core” of Scientology as a non-

member scholar has been clearly identified by several specialists, notably Régis Dericquebourg (2017), J. Gordon Melton (2017, 2018), Hugh Urban (2017). However, if I have not been privy to momentous documents, that I did not request anyway for I never demand from the religious groups I study that they reveal to me what they want to keep for their own members, I was granted access to high ranking office holders and to venues that may not be open to the public nor to the casual investigator.

I will not dwell here on the complexities of the theology; I will only bring up those specific tenets that exert a major dynamogenic function, to use Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) terminology, and coerce the members into concrete actions pushing the group forward nationally and globally. I complemented the information given to me by the staff with my own observations and with the massive historical and technical information available on the Church websites, its journals and now its television channel. Yet, I must confess that such a cornucopia of information constituted a paramount impediment when I tried to organize my notes in a personal way. I had to sieve through data to trace my own path. How could I speak in an original way of real estate expansion for example, since the Internet will give the list of all the buildings and churches?

All this has led me to define a personal mode of presentation: I am attempting here a study of the developments of the Church couched as a journey narrative. I will almost exclusively describe what I saw with my own eyes over the years. Once I had resolved to present my observation in such a way, my methodology appeared simple: in the course of all my explorations and conversations, I identified four areas that to me demonstrate best the expansion of the Church and deserve external analysis:

1. The most visible expansion: several examples of real estate acquisitions and renovations will be presented as well as their social and symbolic function.
2. How does membership keep pace with such material expansion?
3. The Tech or the Word of Lafayette Ron Hubbard (LRH, 1911–1986) as the source of Scientology: the ever increasing dissemination activities will be surveyed and the Preservation of the Tech will be analyzed as a major religious undertaking.
4. The social interactions of the Church through its foundations and its interfaith programs will be presented from my own perspective.

I thank here most particularly Janet Weiland of OSA (Office of Special Affairs) in Hollywood whom I have known for several years and who patiently answered my questions (I can still hear her protesting: “You keep asking me questions as if I were a walking encyclopedia, which I am not!”) and who arranged for my visits of the major facilities of the Church and for meetings with Scientologists literally all over the county of Los Angeles; Luis Gonzalez, Humanitarian Programs Director, Greater Los Angeles Area, for his opening up data and answering more questions in the office at HGB (Hollywood Guaranty Building); Patricia Harney for guiding myself and my family through the various rooms and levels of the Flag in Florida. I also thank for their help over the years on my side of the Atlantic: Éric Roux, President of the Union of Churches of Scientology in France and Vice-President of the European Office of the Church for Public Affairs and Human Rights, as well as Martine Rhein, spokesperson for the Church in France, and before her Danièle Gounord (1941–2018) who passed away in mid-July when I was beginning to write this article. I also thank the many people I interviewed in February and over the years for their taking time to answer my questions, sometimes even in their homes. Finally, I am grateful to my research center CLIMAS of my Université Bordeaux Montaigne for its regular grants to help me cover my research expenses, as well as the University of California at Santa Barbara for its hospitality over the years.

### *I. Real Estate Expansion and Its Social and Cultural Impact*

Real estate is the most obvious expansion of the Church of Scientology. If the administration of the organization and the running of various technical activities require a large number of buildings that are mostly located in and around Hollywood, the local churches are the most numerous structures in the USA and abroad. There are now over sixty ideal orgs (that is to say, churches that offer all services to their parishioners) all over the world with an increase in openings in the last decade. What the caption on the website declares is an actual fact even if it also reeks of hyper self-promotion (as most religious groups would do!): “At the forefront of the greatest era of expansion in Scientology history stand new Ideal Organizations opening in major cities and cultural centers world over” (Scientology 2018a).

Rather than listing all the new facilities for administration, the dissemination of material, media production, etc., and churches that one can easily find on the Internet, I will present in four points, with particular examples, the manner in which the Church has planned its physical expansion: location, architectural renovation, urban revitalization, the spiritual and the symbolical function of the churches themselves. I will not speak of the properties of the Church on the East Coast and in England that are truly historical in the sense that they shouldered its early developments because they have been finely analyzed by Westbrook (2015b, 2016, 2017b) and Rothstein (2014).

### 1. Church Planting Location

As is well-known, in order to impress their followers and potential recruits, the founders and leaders of religions (or of profane companies) will deliberately choose specific architectures and spaces, which will in turn shape the identity of the company and its atmosphere (one of the best books to understand the influence of architecture and space on our personality is Gaston Bachelard's, 1884–1962, *The Poetics of Space*, 1957). Before designing the architectural strategy, location has to be defined. In his guide for successful church planting, the Fuller theologian and church growth specialist, Charles Peter Wagner (1930–2016), who called the operation “an evangelistic methodology” (Wagner 1990, 11), devoted a full chapter to location as “a Crucial Decision,” for nothing “will be more influential on the success or failure [of the] project than proper site selection.” He counseled the aspiring church holder to “start with the geographical location,” “do a feasibility study” and then choose the “target audience”: “Your first step in this case is to find out where the target audience is located and what your options are for geographical areas” (Wagner 1990, 78). These rules have been obeyed by many of the more successful religious entrepreneurs in America, and clearly among them LRH and his successors at the helm.

If, exactly like most of its competitors, the Church of Scientology plants its churches in dense urban areas, and in its global expansion first in foreign capitals or major cities, in the USA it is riveted to two specific hot spots, first and foremost Hollywood (with the Los Angeles area as fall back zone of support) and second Clearwater in Florida, that is to say in the two trendy and sunny arms embracing

the nation. As mentioned above, the first Church facilities were in opposite locations—the founding church was in Washington, D. C. (the National Affairs office is still there), the residence of LRH was in Saint Hill Manor in England, the mother church was established in LA in 1954—so that the ensuing developments could have taken off anywhere. The fact that they did not do so implies that the current major locations are the result of a well-thought out plan.

LRH defined his real estate policy for Hollywood in the 1970s and he moved the international headquarters of the Church there in 1983. Now, the LA area harbors the highest density of Scientologists (around half a million) and it is there that the institution is most positively viewed.

In Hollywood, the Church is now the second real-estate owner, second only to Kaiser Permanente medical centers. Hollywood was a carefully chosen master stroke: it allows for constant interactions with the art world that the Church has defined as its target field of missions, since artists are viewed as role models who will influence society far more than the man on the street. The reasoning follows the Jesuit missionary method from top down perfected by Matteo Ricci, S.J. (1552–1610), in China: first you evangelize the learned elites and persuade them of the superiority of your spiritual system and techniques and in turn they will pass it down to the classes below (this method was not followed by all Catholic missionaries however, the Franciscans for example opting instead to evangelize ordinary people).

Some of the top administrations of the Church and most of its foundations are located there or in the vicinity. Their structures are known by initials turned into acronyms immediately graspable only to members: HGB, CC, PAC, H&H, ASI, LA org, ASHO, AOLA, CCHR, TWTH, HCA... These coded names trace a network of guideposts or beacons across the metropolis that will become the promised City upon the Hill if its denizens obey the gigantic roadside billboards enticing them to find FREEDOM.

The Church's International Headquarters and Media Operations are located outside of LA, at the Gold Base, at 19625 Gilman Springs Road in San Jacinto, in the hills towards Palm Springs.

As for Clearwater, in Florida, its connection is to the love of LRH for the sea. In fact, if most of the facilities of the Church are in the LA area, its most impressive recent architectural expansion is the Clearwater complex that houses

the Flag Land Base and that I will detail after presenting the buildings in LA. A constant flow of Scientologists travel between both extremes of the country, with ever increasing numbers of members who have reached the higher levels of OT (Operating Thetan) settling permanently in Clearwater, when the other levels and administrators keep gravitating to Hollywood (which does not imply that they do not attend their own local churches). We will see the figures for visitors in the part on demographics.

## 2. Architectural Renovation

Most religions will plant highly visible buildings in the territory to show their muscle. The bigger the church, the temple, the mosque, the more powerful the institution. Competing with the largest Christian houses of worship, Hindu and Buddhist groups have in the recent decades built huge temples, some of them following *feng shui* rules, to “Orientalize” the American territory. In the field of new religions or “old new religions,” Mormonism has achieved the most spectacular constructions, borrowing the architectural vocabulary of the ancient master builders of Mesopotamia and of the Gothic to invent a novel grandiose American syncretism. The strategy of Scientology is both similar (striking the viewer and the user) and divergent. It distinguishes itself from other religious entrepreneurs in that it has opted to restore historical buildings rather than build new ones, except for a few such as Flag in Clearwater. The buildings are not necessarily very old, but they must be architectural landmarks of some sort, such as the Dallas-Fort Worth church housed in a very modern glass building (opened in 2009; I visited it in 2014). Many of its buildings are listed on city or national registers as historical landmarks. After describing some of these, I will assess their practical and symbolical function for the institution.

For Hollywood, it seems that the still in force Register is the 1985 *Hollywood Commercial and Entertainment District Register* (published by the NPS, National Park Service) that records several buildings already then in the possession of the Church, but far more were to be purchased after 1985. The Church takes pride in having bought and restored most local icons. As of 2011, it owned “seven historic Hollywood properties worth about \$300 million, part of a Hollywood real estate empire of 26 properties, according to real estate experts,” Daniel Miller wrote in “Scientology’s Hollywood Real Estate Empire” (Miller 2011, 2:



the page numbers given here are of the downloaded pdf. See also O'Connor 2013 for the most notable properties of the Church in LA).

— Celebrity Centre, CC

The first acquisition in 1973 was the famous faux Château de la Loire Hotel, Chateau Élysée, at 5930 Franklin Avenue, that has always amused me with its disproportionate height. It is the jewel in the crown of the French Chateausque historical buildings in Los Angeles (there are quite a few of them gracing the avenues with their pointed turrets and mock stone walls). It was to be demolished for safety reasons when the Church acquired it for \$1.5 million (Miller 2011, 5; see Meares 2013 for photos and historical details). While it still operates as a hotel with a spa, it is also the very church reserved for members connected to the art world. At CC everything is organized to ensure artists will only meet their peers on the premises (well, also some casual non artists like myself...). *Celebrity Magazine* constantly reports on their activities for the various foundations of the Church.

This Hollywoodesque chateau is a rather nice reproduction of the “French chateau concept”: its many lounges and boudoirs are decorated *à la française*, with exquisite furniture, painted ceilings, plush carpets and a garden. The basement is a maze of corridors with medieval looking cottages. The restaurant is a cozy pergola (with painted latticed greenery and cats on the ceiling) that serves very good cuisine. The fact that “centre” is spelled with “tre” in British fashion adds to the old world class of the whole structure.

The upper floors of CC give onto terraces flanked by fancy towerlets with a large vista over the hills of West Hollywood and the sprawl of the city to the ocean. It is now (2018) once more undergoing comprehensive restoration to abide by the constantly evolving safety rules that will probably dispel its quaint antiquated charm.

I read an article that amused me as it is so typically paranoid: in “I Took a Tour of Scientology’s Los Angeles,” blogger Jamie Lee Curtis Taete narrates sarcastically how she and friends visited several properties of the Church and found everything “pretty creepy.” She comments on the restaurant in these terms:

The menu offered the kind of food that I imagine rich people in LA like to eat. Dishes with names like “confit duck risotto,” “gluten-free quinoa crepes,” and “pan fried chilean sea bass” littered the menu. The waiters had thick Lumière-from-Beauty-and-the-Beast French accents which matched the overall vibe of the restaurant a little too perfectly. More than one person at my table independently suggested that the waiters might have been faking their French accents “in order to make the space appear classier.” She then admits she was surprised the food was so cheap “for a place with white table cloths and French accents” (Taete 2015).

Being French myself, I did note the French accent of at least one waiter and immediately spoke French to him (not to check though whether he was faking it but just to chat). He was as French as he could be, even from my own region, which I could also tell from his not fake accent; we spoke about the many other French people working in the food industry in the area and regularly at CC.

— Hollywood Guaranty Building, HGB (6331 Hollywood Blvd.)

It is a major office building of the Church, for it is the seat of the ecclesiastical management offices. The ground floor holds the LRH Life Exhibition, easily accessible from the street. The exhibit is found in all ideal org churches. With its twelve floors, it was one of the highest buildings in the historical district for this was the height limit at the time (it is still one of the highest in the historic district that the city code protects and for which the current height is 150 feet). The register states that it was a major financial institution built in 1923:

...this brick and concrete twelve story Beaux Arts building was designed by John C. Austin [1870–1963], the architect of the Los Angeles City Hall. Its conservative veneer is relatively unaltered, and it retains the classical tripartite division with street level and upper stories mirroring each other in detailing. The central bank entrance is slightly recessed between Corinthian columns with an elaborate frieze over the entry. Building materials are terra cotta, granite, and brick (NPS, Register, item number 7, page 2, or page 15/35).

The real estate management team of the Church has its offices nearby in the HGB Annex at 6349 Hollywood Bd. Nearby, at 6724 Hollywood Blvd, the Church of Scientology Information Center occupies the former Christie Hotel, built in 1922 and designed by Arthur R. Kelly (1878–1959; he was misnamed as “Arthur B. Kelley” in the register and historic marker, see Pool 2011). The register reads:

The Christie was the first hotel to be erected in the 20s on Hollywood Boulevard as city boosters realized the city’s need to accommodate tourists and the transient movie industry.

An eight-storey Georgian Revival brick structure, the hotel is divided into three towers. Three dormers with rounded pediments project above the roofline. Classical proportion and detailing are evident in the massing and decoration used (NPS, Register page 8 of item 7 or page 21/ 35 pdf).

— Pacifica, PAC

The largest real estate complex of the Church is the huge, mostly art-deco-style campus in East Hollywood, named The Ideal Pacifica Bridge (shortened to PAC), which fills the whole block on Sunset between N. Catalina Street, L. Ron Hubbard Way, and Fountain Avenue. The biggest building was designed by Claud Beelman (1883–1963) as the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital that tended famous patients such as Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962), Errol Flynn (1909–1959), Mae West (1893–1980), Burt Lancaster (1913–1994)... The Church purchased it in 1976 for \$5 million. It is not registered as a historical landmark.

The Ideal Church of LA (opened in 2010) looks onto Sunset, at 4810, just across from Kaiser Permanente hospital. It was remodeled from an existing building by architect Gensler who works regularly for the institution. On Fountain, AOLA, Advanced Organization Los Angeles, offers OT higher level seminars (up to OT V in LA). On L. Ron Hubbard Way stands ASHO, American Saint Hill Organization. Named after Saint Hill Manor in England where LRH taught in the very beginning, this college specializes in the higher level training of auditors who, once fully qualified, can assist members with their auditing in the top levels of the Bridge, unlike ordinary auditors who will only follow a much shorter training and will not be allowed for higher levels.

To house visitors two retreats were opened in October 2015: Golden Crest Religious Retreat and Fountain Religious Retreat. The complex features various other office buildings and venues for social activities. There are also specific residences for the staff. Other offices lie outside the PAC block: on N. New Hampshire Avenue stands for example IAS Administrations Western United States Branch Office (IAS: International Association of Scientologists).

The Scientology symbols of the intertwined S and of the pyramid are crafted into art-deco-looking patterns repeated on each floor on the outside walls of Saint Hill, all in blue. On another building across the way, the OT symbols, also crafted as art deco patterns on a grey steel or pewter like plaque alternate vertically with

the windows. The Pacifica Bridge logo (with the cross) is crafted in a steel looking material in the style of the top of the epitome art deco structure, the Chrysler building in Manhattan.

The whole complex is painted in the inimitable blue that LRH chose to evoke the blending of the church/Church into the Southern California sky, just as members who progress on the Bridge to Total Freedom will plunge into celestial bliss. One can interpret the ensemble as the Californian version of the beautifully colored and gem studded New Jerusalem descending from the heavens in the final vision of the Book of Revelation, a comparison not so far-fetched when we know how religious Americans have, since the early Puritans, consistently imagined their nation as the new Zion, the New Jerusalem at last realized on earth by themselves. If the Mormons have perfected the simile more so than other groups, the Scientologists do envision millennial fulfillment as well, the Golden Age of Knowledge, albeit radically outside the strict biblical context, as we shall see in the following chapters.

Even outside of Hollywood, the Church exhibits its fondness for art deco jewels: for example the South Los Angeles church at the West 81 Street and South Vermont Avenue corridor, called “Inglewood community center” probably to downplay its churchy identity in the tough neighborhood of South Central (and because there exists also the Inglewood church not too far away), was a remarkable 1930s art deco cinema with a tower that “the Church meticulously restored” (opened in 2011; I visited it in 2018).

The Orange County church in Santa Ana (opened in 2012) is itself a very interesting piece of architecture in semi art deco and gothic revival built in 1931 as a Masonic Lodge. Another example, much farther away, is the Tel Aviv church in the old heart of Jaffa, which was the famous Alhambra theater whose art deco architecture has been preserved, with some remodeling of the major hall (opened in 2012; I visited it in 2017).

— Clearwater, the Flag Land Base in Florida

The base at Clearwater has been greatly expanded in the last decades not only to accommodate the increasing number of visiting members but also to display the power of the Church. The main building that features a huge cathedral-like lobby and a chapel, was completed in 2013. To keep up with the general strategy

of the institution, its Renaissance revival style duplicates that of the old Fort Harrison hotel that the Church had originally purchased in 1975 and that was its religious center until renovation; the hotel is very large but the Flag building is about five times as big. The two buildings are connected like Siamese twins by a high bridge whose obvious practical function is doubled by its symbolical representation of the Bridge to Total Freedom, the complete training system of the Church. This bridge is a large built-over corridor with Palladian windows topped by a balustrade similar to that on the Flag building. The balustrade endows the whole complex with a clearly Italianate or French chateausque identity echoing the Hollywood faux chateaux.

The Flag is the most precious center for the spiritual expansion of parishioners. My guide, Patricia Hartney, proudly explained to me that going to Clearwater was for Scientologists like going to the Vatican for Catholics. The name Flag was given in 1975 when the Sea Org anchored at Clearwater and left the ships. The Sea Org, founded in 1967 by LRH, is the top tier personnel organized as a religious order. The science fiction sounding name is short for “sea organization” because it was first installed on three ships of LRH: the Apollo, the Diana, the Athena, three names obviously evoking eponymous ancient Greek gods and their impact on the development of Western civilization. The Apollo was the master ship on which LRH formulated the most elaborate doctrines and practices of the Church, notably the Operating Thetan levels (OT). I know Scientologists who worked for him on board and revere him dearly to this day. Once he felt he had reached a satisfying level, he decided the Sea Org should be run on land. The members supervise the whole structure and must abide by specific rules that will be summarized in the following section.

Members who wish to climb the higher levels of initiation on the Bridge to Total Freedom, that is to say the courses beyond the OT V level, must go to Clearwater. Only the highest level OT VIII remains so far taught at sea on the *Freewinds* that still sails around the Caribbean.

Clearwater is one of those Gulf of Mexico resort cities with a large lagoon and beautiful beaches, which explains the historical presence of the Fort Harrison hotel, conveniently located not far from the beach, but not too close either to avoid rising waters from storms. It was built in 1926 by Ed Haley (1890–1968), one of those entrepreneurs who developed Florida, among whom probably the most famous was Henry Morrison Flagler (1830–1913), who built the

impressive railway system of the state and had the brilliant idea of linking all the keys to Key West with a 200 km long railway system mostly on bridges. In fact, one wonders whether LRH decided to name “Bridge” the progression of Scientology after sailing along or under Flagler’s architectural feats. Next to the complex, the Clearwater Peace Memorial Presbyterian Church rivals architecturally with its younger neighbor: it is itself a large Mexican revival building painted in pink with an elaborate three tiered bell tower and a tropical garden enclosed (the large size and intricate architecture of many Presbyterian churches in America has always struck me as so radically at odds with the simplicity of the original Scottish kirks). I was told the parish works closely with the Scientologists there for different programs.

The Fort Harrison hotel that underwent total renovation and was inaugurated in 2009 is in the line of all American luxury hotels, with a signature grand staircase in the middle of an immense lobby furnished in comfortable Victorian style. My family and I visited the bedrooms, the lounges, the meeting rooms of various sizes, and we ate in the restaurant, with several Italian families at the neighboring tables. Outside, against the backdrop of the exotic pink Presbyterian church, the pool and a permanent buffet invite members to relax and to leave their children in good hands.

The Flag building itself opens onto a gigantic cathedral shaped nave, the Grand Atrium, with large windows in glass manufactured to withstand hurricane level 5 winds. In fact, the nave structure is deceptive for it is not the innermost spiritual part of the building but a giant lobby, connected to the rest of the building and the outside bridge by a majestic double curving staircase. On the ground floor there are cafés, and aligned along the windows the eight groups of metal statues designed by non-Scientologists artists with the mission to represent the concept of the eight dynamics (for details see Introvigne 2018).

Opposite them, the Grand Chapel, in the classical architectural pattern of Christian churches, features the cross of Scientology above a plain altar, between two vertical stained glasses in alabaster-looking glass evoking the alabaster windows of several ancient churches in Rome, with the bust of LRH on the left. The windows on the sides of the chapel are decorated merely with an arrangement of yellow, blue and green glass bearing LHR’s important statements coming from “The Factors,” the brief document that is Hubbard’s most important theological statement: “Before the beginning was a Cause and the entire purpose of the

Cause was the creation of effect”; “The first action of beingness is to assume a viewpoint”; “The second action of beingness is to extend the viewpoint, points to view, which are dimension points”; “Thus there is space created, for the definition of space is: viewpoint of dimension. And the purpose of a dimension point is space and a point to view”; “The action of a dimension point is reaching and withdrawing”; “And thus there is Light. And thus there is energy. And thus there is life.”

The auditing, the various course rooms, the offices, etc. are on the upper floors. There were many people when we visited these floors, most of them intensely involved in one to one courses. It is clear that “Clearwater” is a most vibrant center of betterment for Scientologists, with the activities inside of the complex faithfully fulfilling the promise of the massive architecture.

### 3. The Strategy of Renovation: Urban Revitalization and General Economic Impact

The motivation of the Church for its renovation policy is two-fold: first, it builds for the future on tested ground, convinced that the historical, cultural, social, political virtues radiated by the buildings themselves for decades will be transferred to itself, what would be called in Weberian terms a process of charisma transfer. For example, the choice of the HGB (Hollywood Guarantee Building) as one headquarter was not a happenstance: its Beaux-Arts Revival style, extremely popular in the USA in the last decades of the 19th century, was deliberately chosen in the country at large for official buildings, banks and large museums from the 1880s into the 1920s and 30s, because it was thought to symbolize “financial and professional solidity” (NPS, Register p. 3 of the 35 page pdf).

Second, such policy promotes the Church as public benefactor since it is the members themselves who with their own money participate in the salvaging of historically important buildings that without intense restoration would be demolished. Grant it, “Scientology’s designation as a religion exempts the group from paying some property taxes on buildings used for spiritual purposes (affording the church an annual savings of at least hundreds of thousands of dollars)” (Miller 2011, 3). “In Hollywood, the church saved more than \$200,000 last year in property taxes on its historic buildings” (Miller 2011, 7).

Also in several districts (as in Pasadena) when a building is nominated on the registers, its owners can apply for rehabilitation incentives, yet one must underline the fact that the cost of the restoration and of its maintenance over the years balances the amount saved by the tax exemption and incentives.

The Church has been commended by local authorities, both the California State Legislature and municipalities, since it saves taxpayers' money by financing all the renovations itself with the utmost respect for the accurate heritage of the buildings. In each restored building, there will be a small exhibit tracing its history and highlights. I visited the ideal org of Pasadena at 35 South Raymond Avenue and like in the other churches, I was struck by the quality of the renovation. Here it was that of the bicycle factory built in 1906 for Edgar Braley (1867–1930), with an inner courtyard in the architectural style of the early Chicago department stores. It was designed by Charles W. Buchanan (1852–1921) in the Beaux Arts style. After the demise of bicycles, it became Pasadena's first electric company. It is included in the Old Pasadena Historic District, whose Register was approved by the National Park Service in 1981. It was bought for \$10 million and opened in 2010. The Pasadena Historic Preservation Commission gave the church an award (for more detail and photos, see Bernstein 2010).

These are some of the reasons why Miller says the Church “has many fans” and enjoys “a good-neighbor status as its acquisitions continue” (Miller 2011, 1). Furthermore, the journalist explains that,

City officials, preservationists and scholars alike call the church a first-rate caretaker of historic Hollywood. Preservationists including Linda Dishman, executive director of the Los Angeles Conservancy, and city officials including Councilman Tom LaBonge and Ken Bernstein, manager of the Office of Historic Resources, roundly offer praise. ‘They have provided for positive adaptive-reuse projects in Hollywood, giving new life to many of the Hollywood structures,’ says Bernstein, ‘and they have largely preserved the significant historic and architectural features of their Hollywood buildings.’ Adds Richard Adkins, president of Hollywood Heritage, a preservation group: ‘They seem to always have the vision of being good stewards and neighbors’ (Miller 2011, 3).

Miller notes appraisingly also that the Church works with the best building contractors and architects:

And the companies that work with the church on these dealings are anything but fringe—they're major players in real estate, including architecture firm Gensler, which is designing the proposed NFL stadium in downtown Los Angeles, and real estate services firm CB



Richard Ellis Group, which boasts more than 400 offices in more than 60 countries (Miller 2011, 3).

The institution may also contribute to the salvaging of threatened historical buildings even with which it has no direct connection. I found that, among many such donations, it had participated in helping to remove the Governor's Mansion in Sacramento from the Closure list in 2012:

California State Parks Capital District has proudly announced that, due to generous corporate partnerships and community support, the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park (SHP) is now officially off the closure list... Among the numerous community supporters... the Church of Scientology of Sacramento recently contributed \$25,000 to the Foundation to aid in the effort... (Capital District State Museums & Historic Parks. News Release June 28, 2012).

The same story is repeated in many locations, as for example in Taiwan. The ideal org opened in 2013 in the large industrial harbor of Kaohsiung at the South Western tip of the island. Again many local authorities came to the ceremony as is reported in a long article in *The Atlantic* (2016) by Benjamin Carlson on "The Curious Rise of Scientology in Taiwan": "Taiwan's deputy director of the Ministry of the Interior praised the group that funded the renovation [of a former downtown hotel] and presented them, for the 10th year straight, with the national 'Excellent Religious Group' award" (Carlson 2016, 1-2, the page numbers given here are of the saved pdf).

I have not mentioned this church just because I visited it but because Taiwan has been very open to Scientology: the first mission was founded in the later 1980s and now there are 15 Scientology missions and churches on the island. Furthermore, the Church was officially recognized there as a religion in 2003. The Kaohsiung church was indeed the most bustling I have ever visited, with at least 200 people following courses and being audited at the same time on a Sunday (June 17, 2018).

Per capita, it's one of the most Scientology-friendly countries on earth. The island serves as a major source of donations and new members for the church, which has capitalized on L. Ron Hubbard's early suggestions that he was a new Buddha (Carlson 2016, 2).

One must not however here ignore the many questions raised every time a new church opens. The Internet will pour out thousands of complaints either as full articles or as commentaries below articles. The many commentaries below Pauline O'Connor's list of the Church's most interesting properties offer a good

sample of the outcries. Miller also lists the “questions about the motives” of the Church and the controversies:

Among the hot-button points: Scientology’s designation as a religion exempts the group from paying some property taxes on buildings used for spiritual purposes... the claim by defectors that the historic-building program is simply part of a public relations and marketing campaign designed to bolster the church’s ranks of celebrity adherents... and issues raised by defectors about Scientology’s labor practices as they relate to the restoration of historic buildings (Miller 2011, 3).

Another good example of such critical viewpoint is found in the article by Carlson quoted above. It is indeed interesting not so much because it gives details on the church in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, but because it is typically critical of its installation, and it is above all another anti-Scientology exposé, with the cliché premise: “‘Scientology around the world is in broad retreat’, so why is it successful in Taiwan?” It is written in the typical style of American investigative reporters, with a running narrative usually in the semi-sarcastic mode, interspersed with precise data to retain the attention of the readers. Here the bitter melody line is a long interview of Yang, an ex-Scientologist Taiwanese who complains about the money he invested in his auditing and courses, how he was forced to go to Australia for the upper levels, and how before recently everything was in English, so that Chinese members faced major problems to understand, etc.

If the success of the Kaohsiung church is presented fairly, what I found rather disturbing in the text is the fact that the author attributes the popularity of Scientology there to the meek obedience of the Taiwanese who supposedly will not dare disobey their Scientologist mentors. Yang is quoted as saying that he flew to Australia in 2004 because: “It’s the nature of Taiwanese,” said Yang. “Because Taiwanese are obedient, [Scientologists] use hard-sell techniques.” The author goes on: “Taiwan serves Scientology as a source of recruits, laborers, and donors” (Carlson 2016, 8) and the article, as *obligé*, ends on Yang’s “I did feel I was brainwashed... How come I was so controlled, people telling me what to do and not to do? What to read and not to read?” (Carlson 2016, 16).

Now, the journalist does mention the extreme variety of religions in Taiwan but never wonders why people unhappy with their new religion, that is Scientology in this case, would not opt for another one, and why so many would stay with it. In my three visits to Taiwan to observe new religions, I have found that people

shifted easily from one movement to the other when they were not satisfied with their current one. Moreover, Carlson did not, apparently, interview people happy with their following Scientology, or, if he did, they are not reported in the article. The text portrays Taiwanese as meek Confucian sheep easily exploitable by the evil Hollywood cult, without acknowledging that the religious market competition there is so intense that they can quit one group any time to try another one. Furthermore Taiwanese are very practical minded and consider that a religion must be useful and make you prosperous, so that they will only remain in the movement that helps them succeed in their personal and professional life. I know several members of a strictly Taiwanese new religion who have taken Scientology courses, appreciated the techniques as useful for their own project, and were never forced to take more, typically in a Taiwanese example of religion *à la carte*.

Furthermore, if being Confucian and open to the West was enough to buy into Scientology, another fertile mission field would be South Korea. However, as Cyrus Brooks, the Seoul mission holder, explained to me in Pocheon in October 2018 there are just a few Scientologists scattered around the country, which makes it very hard for him to turn the mission into a church.

Now, to return to the policy of architectural renovation: what are its benefits for the Church? The goal seems to be to curry favor. Because renovation entails neighborhood regeneration, the Church views this as a major gift to the communities in which it settles, and these will in turn view it favorably. Since the habit is to purchase almost exclusively older buildings in historical urban districts that in the USA are still often decrepit, it is clear that the renovation may instill pride in the neighborhood and attract new businesses. According to what I have visited, I would not say that the missions or the churches of Scientology contribute so much to the gentrification of run-down neighborhoods (a much debated process, since the process drives low income families out while bringing in moneyed ones) as to their revitalization without necessarily forcing modest families out. The avowed goal of the Church being to help disadvantaged people to better themselves, it has no interest whatsoever in having them move out when it moves in.

Hollywood is an urban case apart but I had the feeling in 2018 that it was far less seedy and shady than in previous decades (I have spent quite a lot of time in Southern California since the 1970s). Though I will not affirm that this was due

to the massive presence of Scientologists, the renovation of so many major buildings has certainly played an important role for, via some form of peer pressure, it may have enticed other companies to follow suit, which is a trend that has been studied for at least downtown LA, notably by Bullen and Love (2009). These engineers examined:

the program and legislation that is adopted to encourage the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings in the downtown area of Los Angeles..., as it is considered to be an exemplar of how a regeneration strategy makes a contribution to sustainability....The advantages of adaptive reuse in terms of sustainability appear to outweigh the advantages of demolition and new development as experienced in LA. Certainly in terms of urban regeneration the adaptive reuse program in the downtown area appears to have been something of a catalyst in prompting investment in major developments.

The regeneration brought about by the Church is definitely ascertained in places like LA South Central. The local authorities invited to the openings of centers repeatedly hail the Church for the positive influence it will play in the neighborhood (a sarcastic observer would say that they are obliged to say so, but they do seem to be sincere and they were not forced to attend).

The report on the opening of the Inglewood church in November 2011 (South LA; at 315 South Market Street) lists the guests:

Welcoming the new Church were Inglewood City Council member, Ralph Franklin; Inglewood Chief of Police, Jacqueline Seabrooks; President of NAACP Los Angeles, Leon Jenkins; Executive Director of the gang intervention group 2nd Call, Skipp Townsend; and Rev. Cecil “Chip” Murray, retired head of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles and now Professor of Religious Studies at USC.

The report then quotes City Council member Ralph Franklin who welcomed the new Church:

I for one am very excited about your move to your new home. Thank you for being our anchor to Market Street. You are helping revitalize downtown and offering us a platform from which we can make a segue [a follow up] into our greater future. I have faith that your presence will be the catalyst for this city’s renaissance. And so it is with great pleasure that on behalf of all of us here in the City of Inglewood I say congratulations on your new home and welcome to the family (Scientology 2018b).

I met with Stormy Stokes, the director of the Inglewood Center on February 22, 2018. She explained the strategy of having the center close to Skid Row:

Our main focus is to reach out to get African Americans and Latinos to come, but also the other groups since Inglewood has a lot of Whites, Chinese, Filipinos, Africans from Africa etc. There are major differences between the two larger groups: the Latinos are growing because they live a more healthy life and so they have a lot of children. The African Americans do not have babies because of drugs. Those who want the Tech more are the Latinos. The Latinos also come more because we offer legal advice and a lot of them are illegal, so that we help them about their rights, about their rights on mental health because often they can be thrown in psychiatric wards. Latinos try to send money back home and they keep to themselves as families.

Not so for the Blacks who don't know their roots, or believe they all descend from slaves. I myself am fortunate because I have done genealogical research and I traced my roots to the ancient Arabs in Seville and I have my coat of arms. I feel our people need to check their history because we don't all come from slaves.

She then said how she ran Golden Dawn lectures (one specific series of lectures that LRH recorded in Phoenix) every week to teach people how to defeat apathy, and their inability to do anything constructive. Gradually people get ready for auditing. "They are going to have to accept people. The courses ignite a person's life."

She and her aides organize events in the center, with between 100 to 600 people attending. The Latinos like the fact that she speaks Spanish (though she had to ask her translator to do the job!). In the last few years, the center has witnessed many changes since the Peace Rides, on which I will conclude, started right there.

Though in Hollywood it is difficult to measure the precise economic impact of the presence of the Church (I have not been able to find such a study) because not only are its facilities spread in several districts and outside of Hollywood but the urban density is high with hundreds of companies operating there, such a study has been conducted in Clearwater (which is a rather small suburb of Tampa) where the Church presence is concentrated in one very visible location. There, the exponential increase of the number of Scientologists in the recent decades has led several locals and journalists to voice their concerns. To assuage their fears, the Church commissioned the Florida State University's Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis (CEFA) to measure the impact of its presence. The 72 page CEFA report that came out in 2014 analyses all the consequences of the activities of the church. The executive summary explains the methodology:

In order to obtain estimates of the different types of macroeconomic effects of the Church of Scientology on the Florida economy, the project team applied a well-established analytical tool known as the IMPLAN model. The IMPLAN Model (2012), an input output model, was used to perform the economic modeling analyses. The historical (actual data from years 1999-2013) was provided by the Church of Scientology's CPA firm, NSBN LLP<sup>2</sup>, including capital outlay, equipment, staff allowance, among other data. The project team collected survey data from the Church visitors and residents population. In addition, data from Clearwater area Scientologist-owned businesses were collected and analyzed (Harrington, Niekus and Glassner 2014, 4).

Some of the findings:

The Church's direct spending in the six-county area on construction of its Clearwater properties between 2007 and 2013 was approximately \$157 million. Church spending globally for construction activity in the Clearwater area was \$252 million. The economic impact in the six-county area due to the construction activity was \$282 million in output (sales/revenue) and 1,832 construction jobs (Harrington, Niekus and Glassner 2014, 60).

The economic impact results show [that the total input of \$530.5 million (Harrington, Niekus and Glassner 2014, 60)] of the Church of Scientology

generates \$917 million (\$485 million in direct, and \$432 million in indirect and induced impacts) in economic output in the area, and almost \$338 million in income (\$181 million in direct, and \$157 million in indirect and induced impacts) while generating a total of 7,514 jobs (4,311 direct, and 3,203 indirect and induced impacts)" (Harrington, Niekus and Glassner 2014, 63).

Another useful figure in the report is that of the income of the visitors:

The median income of visitors is estimated at \$90,326 while the current median income in the Clearwater area is \$42,427.19. Visitor survey respondents' income is higher by about 113 percent, when compared with the median income in the Clearwater area (Harrington, Niekus and Glassner 2014, 22).

We can say that the high income of the visitors is a prerequisite since traveling as families to Florida and residing there for what Americans call "quality time," is expensive, without mentioning the cost of the courses and training. There are nevertheless quite a few Scientologists who would have saved for years in order to come and train here, without being rich at all. I learned from one person in charge of a mission that even those who volunteer to work for the institution have to finance their trip, their stay and teaching. They will only get some stipend when they are expressly missionized by the authorities to travel somewhere on behalf of the institution.

In his news report on the findings, the Church's *Freedom Magazine* underlined several points, notably that the constantly augmenting presence of Church members had allowed the area to ignore the plights of other cities after the 2008 real estate crisis:

The Church—along with most Clearwater business, civic and political leaders—encourages an influx of new housing, retailing and business opportunities. The hefty numbers contained in the CEFA report are exactly the sort of numbers developers and entrepreneurs want to see before investing in a community. Scientology's total annual impact on the Tampa Bay area—almost \$1 billion—has grown each year in excess of 10 percent. That means stability for the community. When the national real estate recession hammered Florida, the Church from 2007 to 2013 spent \$252,260,468 on construction, restoration and renovation projects—meaning a lot of Tampa Bay area companies and their employees found work. The current FSU analysis was preceded by studies conducted in 1999 and 2007 by other independent economists commissioned by the Church.

The author concludes that the study's findings demonstrate that Clearwater has become a company city, with the Church, along with tourism and high tech companies, as one of its major providers of businesses and funds: "The Church and its parishioners have produced a cornucopia of riches for Clearwater—a reliable, stable source of money and jobs" (Sugg 2014).

The expansion of the organization is thus lauded as a source of riches for all the communities that harbor its churches.

#### 4. The Churches as the Bedrock of Scientology: Their Practical and Symbolical Function

New churches have been opened seemingly at an accelerated pace in the last few years, and several others have undergone enlargement (such as the Burbank/Valley church). Just in February 2018, two opened in the West USA: in Mountain View (in the heart of Silicon Valley) and in Salt Lake City. As of December 2018, the Church owns 12.1 million square feet of Ideal Church spaces worldwide. This includes 62 new churches and community centers opened in the past 10 years.

The International Landlord Office is the team that plans the real estate expansion such as the creation of new churches. It is under the supervision of Ciara Rogers who succeeded Bob Wright in 2010. At HGB, I could read the

transcript of an interview where she explains how she learned how to work from scratch thanks to the advice of David Miscavige:

L. Ron Hubbard, actually developed the technology of how to deliver Dianetics and Scientology and he laid those out in thousands of policy letters and issues on how an Ideal Church of Scientology should deliver and operate. And Mr. David Miscavige, knowing all of those policies and having read all of those policies looked at how he was going to achieve that. When previous executives of the past looked at it as something daunting, something that they couldn't achieve and might be impossible, Mr. Miscavige looked at it as something that could be achieved and he actually laid out the exact strategy and organization within the Landlord Office to achieve this.

The idea was to figure out how every parishioner could try to build a church, knowing it would be impossible to do it themselves. This is when the Office comes in to help them realize what they actually wish to build: it works as a machine at a global level to get the churches completed, always within the limits of the standards that L. Ron Hubbard had set. Ciara Rogers then describes the manner in which when she could not figure out how to start, David Miscavige helped her implement these ideas on location:

We were planning a very large building and I was having a hard time, going through the motions of figuring out how to space plan this building in this area, because it connected with a lot of different things, it was pretty intricate. And he gave me a task. He said why don't you tape it all out. So I taped it all out of exactly where all the furniture would go and where everything went. And he had me sit in a chair in that location and operate in that area and push it back and how does it feel. And, he was asking me questions to get me to see, and feel how it would actually be in the physical universe. It made me see how should I actually optimally plan that area. And there's been so many times that he has gotten me to look, and feel and see something. And he doesn't just point it out and say, "Do that." He takes the time to walk me through it, and get me to actually learn and see, and asks me questions about what do, how did you get that or how did you see that? And at the end of doing that, I was able to start planning things realistically (Summary of the transcript read on February 19, 2018).

The International Landlord Office will only decide to open a local church when the mission on the site has proved successful, though there are two recent exceptions: the one opened in October 2016 in Dublin, Ireland, and the one opened in November 2011 in LA South Central, for though there was no pre-existing mission in either case the authorities felt the communities in both areas needed to be helped. Like mission holders, church parishioners have to finance the purchase, the renovation or extension of the buildings, and the functioning of their missions. Yet, when there are not enough members locally to contribute, if



they come up with a special purpose, CSI will bring financial support. The process the organization goes through to acquire buildings and to plan the funding is summarized by Miller (2011, 6).

The buildings must be at least 40,000 square feet in order to hold all the offices. In an article on the opening of the Pasadena church, the spokesman for the Church Tommy Davis is quoted as saying that the cost of each building will fetch from \$4 million to \$20 million without the renovation expenses (Bernstein 2010). I was given the total cost for the Detroit church: the Church paid \$3.5 million for the Standard Savings & Loan Building in 2007, and the renovations cost about \$8 million.

The Valley church, at 1455 Burbank Blvd. in North Hollywood, has undergone massive extension to be now the largest Scientology church in the country. Cathy and Hagit, the church holders, told me that it took the parishioners thirteen years to raise the funds for the extension of the forty-year-old structure. It is one of the prettiest new churches I ever visited with its large modern spaces painted white and with the furniture in olive green.

#### — The Staff

Because of the requirement to finance everything they undertake, church holders and general members spend a lot of time and energy planning fund raising operations: they will organize all kinds of celebrations, concerts, exhibits, games etc. to attract people and collect money. There are different types of staff, and it is rather complicated to place the people one meets and talks to: many of those I met are mere volunteers, who do commit a lot of time and energy to their mission or their church or some office yet they may have a job or another type of personal activity outside the Church. Others are ranked “staff”: they may have taken vows only for a certain length of time, and they can be called clergy as well, but they can live what we would call a fairly normal life with a family, in their own homes.

A good example of such personal itinerary is that of Hagit whom I met at the Valley church. She came from Israel to visit an American who had volunteered in her kibbutz.

He was a symbol of spirituality. I realized spirituality was missing in my life as there is no spirituality in a kibbutz, where the Bible must be read exclusively as a history book. I stayed.

I studied acupuncture. I went back to Israel to be a music teacher. Then I came back to California. I did fund raising for the Church for thirteen years and a year ago I joined the staff. I also have my own activity as I practice acupressure at home.

Another example is that of *Éric Roux* whom I have known for years in France. In a long interview in Paris (November 30, 2018) he explained to me how he had discovered Scientology, decided to take courses and finally to become part of the staff. His own itinerary is very “French” in that he comes from a totally non-religious, agnostic, highly learned and high achieving family, and it was through his dissatisfaction with his life that he took to studying religions until his encounter with Scientologists convinced him this was his path.

The level of education in the family was very high: my mother went to *École Normale Supérieure* to become a highly qualified (*agrégée*) Math teacher, my father went to *Polytechnique* and became a high-level computer engineer, who ran several international companies; one of my uncles joined the *Corps des Mines*, etc.

But *Éric* was not interested in preparing for the same type of highly competitive exams they had gone through, and at 16 he left school that he found boring to pursue a career as a musician. Meanwhile, he was very interested in spirituality and religion, and studied several religions and books, including the Bible, the Vedas, the Upanishad, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism... He discovered Scientology at the age of 21, in 1993.

I was introduced to it via a girlfriend who took me to *Celebrity Centre* in Paris. I bought a dozen of books and went back home to study them. Then I knew I had found what I had been looking for for so long. The brightness of LRH, as well as the “it makes sense” that came out of his books, and the hope it represented were the triggers that drove me in. I started to practice auditing and I very rapidly realized that I had to take responsibility for disseminating it to humanity. I joined staff a few weeks after having discovered Scientology, and I have not regretted it for the last 25 years.

Since then, he has held many positions in the organization, from the bottom to the top. In 2009, he was the Deputy Executive Director of the *Celebrity Center* in Paris, when he was asked to be the Church’s representative in a trial in France. He accepted, but then he faced such violent attacks that he interpreted as stemming from ignorance and prejudice against his Church, that he decided to apply for an external function. He thus became the spokesperson of the Church in France, and the President of the *Union of Churches of Scientology of France*. And gradually, he extended his social networks first in France and then in the whole of Europe. He started to work at the European level where he was most

successful. He was appointed Vice President of the European Office of the Church of Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights in 2017.

In France, beside his role as spokesperson which threw him in the glare of the popular medias (see Roux 2011a, 2011b, 2012a), he started to meet people one by one: decision makers, influencers, politicians, journalists, civil servants, etc. He wanted a chance to correct the falseness and the prejudice they had against Scientology:

I decided that 80 percent of these people were good people, and that their prejudice stemmed from ignorance, not evilness. And it worked. At the beginning these people were quite reluctant to meet with me. But soon it became easier, and I realized that most of the people in France were not convinced at all by the rumors on Scientology and only wanted to be properly informed. So I informed them. Hundreds of people, one by one.

— The Sea Org

Positions of specific authority will be held by the higher-ranking staff who belong to the elite Sea Org. They have been recruited because of their obvious strong commitment to the Church, their remarkable success at promoting it, and their high level of morality (their whole life is scrutinized, even their life before joining the Church). Some high-ranking positions can be held by mere clergy, not everybody being allowed into the Sea Org (see Melton 2018 for a complete study of the Sea Org as “A Contemporary Ordered Religious Community”; I only relay here what I could observe and was explained by Patricia Hartney and Janet Weiland, both members of the Sea Org).

Sea Org members share community living on the model of traditional monasteries and, as they proudly confide, their life is similar to that of monks and nuns in the Catholic tradition, though they can be married and are definitely not cloistered (but neither are all monks or nuns). They do live a consecrated life and thus have to abide by very strict rules. They share fairly small rooms with at least another member if they are single, or small apartments if they are married. They own very little to their name, and they have scant furniture for themselves. They share meals in a cafeteria except when their mission implies their eating out.

Their work conditions resemble that of many professionals in our Western countries: they work long hours, with daily reports to file at the end of the days; on Sundays, they are supposed to attend the morning service and then be free but

may be obliged to work then, as I could judge by myself when I accompanied Janet Weiland to her interfaith obligations on Sundays. They are granted short holidays. Any leave of absence must be authorized in advance. They do not get a salary but a stipend to cover their most basic needs; they will get more funds to cover the expenses required by their public engagements with exact proofs of spending, exactly like in any company or institution.

Until recently, they could be married and have children but having children is no longer authorized. Someone has suggested that this was to make sure the institution would not be sued by unhappy second generation members, as many of the current ones have complained about not being brought up by their parents who were too involved in church activities. The official reason I was given upholds the previous one: like in a monastery, the time consecrated to work and spiritual training does prevent Sea Org members from taking care of a family. When asked whether they belonged to the Sea Org or wished they did, several of the very active members I interviewed replied that they did not want to apply, though they knew they stood a good chance of being accepted, because they wanted to retain their freedom, even if they already dedicated a large amount of their free time to the Church.

#### — Rituals: Auditing and Teaching as Practical Initiation into Spiritual Growth

As all those who have visited several Scientology churches know, though all are architecturally different, the space organization inside always follows the same requirements. First, past the reception desk one finds large shelves displaying LHR books and CD boxes with flamboyant signature iconography. In other corners, screens and seats allow visitors to watch the multiple videos that are the trademark of the movement: each will broach specific personal and social issues.

The churches form the actual space where the Scientologist progress on the Bridge to Total Freedom. Each church is ranked according to the level of training it can offer. For example, “Class V org” means the Academy can train up to Class V auditors. There are numerous offices for the local directors of the different departments of the organization. They are organized according to Divisions listed on large Organizing Boards, or organigrams, displayed in one corridor and visible by any visitor. Some items, top left: Founder, executive director board of

directors; Executive Division 7, HCO Division 1, Dissemination Division 2, Treasury Division 3, Technical Division 4, Qualifications Division 5.

Below each head title the departments: for example HCO is divided into department 1 of Recognition, 2 of Communication, 3 Perception; division 2 follows with department 4 Orientation, 5 Understandings, 6 Enlightenment; division 3 with department 7 Energy, 8 Adjustment, 9 Body for records, assets, material; division 4: department 10 or Prediction, 11 Activity, training, 12 Production or processing; division 5 with department 13 validity, 14 enhancement, 15 correction; division 7: department 21 is directly below the Founder and is named Source, with office of LRH, then department 20 Existence or OSA, 19 conditions or Office of the executive director.

Of various sizes and all designed for comfortable teaching and learning, the course rooms include Life Orientation Course Room, Key to Life Course Room... The names of rooms correspond to the level of training, for example Enlightenment rooms, in a succession reminiscent of the ordinance rooms in Mormon temples that will have the devotee move according to the specific rituals from one room to another to suggest progressing in life, with the completion of the initiation in the Celestial Room representing the heavens, though the process is not performed in Scientology through sealings and ordinances but through auditing, teaching, learning, correcting, etc. The auditing rooms have large desks with two e-meters in the middle for the auditor and the audited sitting across from each other (see Cowan 2017, 58–9, for an in-depth analysis of the e-meter as center piece of the rituals, as “the perfect culturfact of our ‘calibrated culture’”).

The purification room, meant for Purification Rundown, which is part of Div 4, or Technical Division, holds about five sport sets with usually two saunas, shower rooms on the side, and the vitamin dispensary. Following the Rundown implies a cathartic treatment to eliminate tensions and get rid of various pollutions, such as toxic substances, through physical exercise and a diet of specific herbs and vitamins. It may have to be run for several weeks. The people I spoke to told me they had really felt much better afterwards.

Practicing Scientology definitely implies far more than a weekly one hour long visit to the place of worship. Like a large number of religious centers in the USA, these churches are designed to offer all kinds of amenities allowing their users to spend long hours there beyond the time strictly devoted to auditing and courses (most courses are in late afternoon and evening, or around the lunch break and on

week-ends). Some churches feature children's playgrounds, cafeterias, lounges etc. Trays with juices, biscuits, fruits are displayed in all the corridors. In several churches one can purchase Scientologist jewels that will convey publicly your status on the Bridge: OT pendant with the Dianetics symbol with stripes tapering off to form a flat pyramid, plain or with diamond, OT ring plain or with diamonds, OT earrings, bracelets etc.

If most parts of the building are radically different from what one expects in “a church”—since the Christian architecture will first come to mind even when we are aware that we are in a different territory altogether, somewhat like Mormon temples with their numerous rooms and lounges but not the vast nave and aisles that the cathedral-like structure promised—, the chapel on the contrary corresponds to the concept itself: an altar, seats, the Scientology cross, sometimes stained glass windows with sentences from LRH (I quoted some in the presentation of the Flag chapel above).

Services are held every Sunday at 11 o'clock, with texts of LRH read and discussed. One church chaplain joked that the time had been chosen to make sure people would not be tempted to attend a Christian service at the same time... I was also told that not many members actually come because they would rather follow courses or do auditing during that stretch of time. On my visits on weekdays, I never saw people sitting there to pray or meditate on their own because Scientology is simply not about praying or meditating, their conception of the deity being of a different theological concept. In the chapels, marriages, name giving ceremonies and burial services are held. The chairs and furniture can be reorganized for special events.

Apart from the must-have hundreds of book and video displays and classrooms that are strictly identical throughout the world as we said, some churches boast idiosyncratic artifacts to express their personality more than just through their architecture: the South Central center features colorful Angelinos tile murals that celebrate the happy blending of Scientology (with its logo hovering over the representation of the art deco structure) and the locals who sing and dance. It has kept its original theater hall, a fairly large one, that it still uses for concerts or other social activities, organized either by members or by the outside community itself that can benefit from it gratuitously; it also offers a literacy and tutoring center, most useful in the district as Stormy Stokes explained (see above). Its sister, Inglewood church at 315 South Market Street in Inglewood (opened in

2011) also features beautiful murals in Angelinos tiles that seem older than the others but express the same happy local life of music and dances.

— Pedagogy

I took a Personal Efficiency seminar in the LA church on February 12, 2018, in the evening. It lasted over two hours. For such courses, the students are given “the student hat,” a booklet on the topic of the lesson, with a glossary of all the English vocabulary that may not be known to the general public and sheets with printed questions to fill in. The instructor will stand at the lectern, explain the subject matter, make sure everyone understands all the words in the text, activate with a remote control a shutter that hides a large screen in a wood paneled wall, and then run a short video illustrating one part of the general topic. Students then answer questions on the video; at some point they are asked to apply what they have just learned by interacting with one another and then they will explain orally the results of the interaction. Other sequences follow with the same pedagogical unfolding. After one hour or so, a break with refreshments, biscuits and fruit is offered in the hall outside the classroom; in fact even if people wanted to continue the course without stopping (which was my case), it would not be allowed, the reason being that most people need to rest their mind to absorb the following sequences better. The second session follows the same pattern. At the end, students must evaluate in writing and orally what the course has brought them.

Another person will then meet with them individually, check again the answers entered on the sheets, make sure everything went fine with the instructor and suggest follow-up courses. In my experience (that person did not know who I was), the inspector suggested more courses but nothing was forced upon me, exactly like the first time I bought *Dianetics* in the Paris mission, though I was young and promising! The students will then get a completed course certificate to their name from the Qualifications Division, Department of Validity, signed by the founder, the Director of Validity and the Keepers of the Seals and Signature. Though the seminar follows a strict written outline, the atmosphere is friendly with students and staff members interacting constantly. Two of the other people who sat with me had already taken the seminar but wanted to follow it again as they were training to teach it in their own missions.

As an educator myself, I appreciated the constant attention of the instructor who made sure everybody really understood each step, a method that can only operate unfortunately with very small groups and with a lot of time on hand. In Clearwater I observed (briefly) various types of seminars, all one to one: each student has his/her own instructor constantly asking questions, crossing check lists, so that the pace of progress is completely individualized, with examination and validation after each step by other instructors.

Several of the people I spoke to explained to me that their faithfulness to Scientology rested not just on the knowledge imparted but on the step by step method to impart it. I spoke at length with two teenagers in the Foothills mission in Montrose (at 2254 Honolulu Avenue). One of them explained how the courses helped him learn fast and prepare for a high level program and play quality music also. His friend on the other hand was not so happy with the obligation to take more classes at the end of his normal day in high school and did not feel he needed more prodding. He obviously did not plan to be a super achiever like his friend, in spite of what his parents hoped for him.

The courses taught in the churches by definition implement the Applied Scholastics program that defines a specific pedagogy called Study Technology. It was devised by LRH who, after trying to understand why some people learnt fast and others did not, came to the conclusion that there were three barriers holding people back. These barriers are detailed in books and in the free on-line course anyone can follow with mere registration (it takes between 6 and 7 hours; after completion; the same type of certificate one receives at the end of a face to face course is sent).

The first barrier is the absence of mass, the second “the too steep a gradient,” or the fact that some lessons are too complicated from the start, and the third problem is the unknown or misunderstood words that prevent the learner from understanding the sentence and the full text or film. The last two barriers are definitely overcome by the pedagogy of the seminars as I could judge myself.

As for the first barrier, “absence of mass,” I saw it being resolved in another type of activity, different from the mere video/text teaching seminars. In a classroom, the adults and/or younger people will learn to understand their own emotions and to express themselves through hands-on objects and figurines that they can mold in modeling clay or playdough: they can stick labels on them. All kinds of objects are used to express “in mass,” or concretely, theoretical ideas,



emotions etc. This method reminded me of the techniques developed by Maria Montessori (1870–1952) that start from the premises that the intellect of the child is constantly interacting with the body, with the nervous and muscular system, so that the body plays a major role in the intellectual development of the child. Her pedagogy prioritizes allowing the pupil to grasp practical things through the senses, to manipulate objects, which will lead him/her to understand volumes by holding them, etc. Quite ironically and reciprocally, a controversy erupted in a Toronto Montessori school in 2008, when parents found out that Applied Scholastics methods were introduced by the owner/principal and the dean of the school who were both Scientologists (CBC News 2008). Presumably, these parents did not know that Montessori was herself a member of another group many would call a new religious movement, Theosophy.

In her chapter on “Applied Scholastics and Study Technology: The Educational Perspective Developed by L. Ron Hubbard” in *Children in Minority Religions* (2018), Liselotte Frisk analyzed how these teaching techniques are implemented in one Swedish school, Studema-skolan, whose headmaster is a Scientologist. She comments on the differences with traditional teachings methods and the suspicion the imported techniques aroused in the educational institution. She tracks the fine line between the secular and the religious undergirding of the Study Technology, though the headmaster, as well as Scientologists in general, claims that Applied Scholastics is a technique per se not connected to Scientology as a religion.

Another method is using teddy bears as proxies: they help the student or the instructors communicate a message without blocking its expression or reception. Again, this stage is not just for young learners but for all ages. Observing adults negotiate conversations with and through a teddy bear is a bit strange (as I have done in the Burbank church and in Hubbard College of Administration). The instructor places the teddy in front of him/her so that the person across will not be shy at voicing intimate details to a specific person, and reciprocally the instructor will not feel personally and emotionally involved in the exchange that must remain technical from his/her part. I somehow feel it may be easier for Americans to act this way because of their fondness for teddies even in adulthood and I have yet to observe the same process in France. The comparison with the Catholic confession comes to mind: in the confessional, the confessant and the priest are not visible to the other one, just barely the shadow of the head is

discernible through a small latticed opening that the priest opens only when the confessant has pulled the outside curtain of the cubicle to bar the light (even if after Vatican II, confession is most often done in the open, a form of secrecy is maintained). The priest, like the Scientologist instructor, must remain neutral, and his prodding is only aimed at bringing out the innermost secrets of the confessant.

Such similarity does not imply that the Scientologist student must “confess” sins, for the Christian concept of sin (as a voluntary misdeed that contravenes the divine commandments) and lapsarian humanity is poles apart from the Scientologist view of man as innately good but weakened by outside attacks that provoke negative engrams. There exists in Scientology, though, the concept of transgression of the moral code (but not as a fault towards God), called an overt: it is an act committed or omitted that will not be useful to the group or worse that will negatively impact the life of many. The individual who holds overts to him/herself cannot progress, cannot communicate properly and should learn how to get rid of them (Martine Rhein explained this point to me in detail). Interestingly too, the video that explains how overts block your progress is presented on the course page (“The Overt-Motivator Sequence” within the large chapter on “Integrity and Honesty”) by the photo of a man (looking a lot like President Obama with a cap) who holds his clenched right fist below his left shoulder, exactly how Catholics will strike their heart three times when praying, “Father forgive me for I have sinned.”

The course sheets with the answers, the auditing and all the progress records are archived forever. Critics have said that it is because the Church can use the intimate details registered there to blackmail members into continuing with the initiation. Poles apart from this interpretation, the motive given by Scientologists is for them theologically justified: I was explained that when people feel they are not progressing as smoothly as they expect, instructors at Qual (for Qualifications Division or Div 5, which is responsible for making sure processing and training has been done correctly) need to be able to go over the recorded personal material to make sure that the clearing process was done properly, and if not to go all over it again until the mistake is found and solved. This may be performed years after the first operations. Furthermore, the code of ethics Scientologists must abide by would definitely ban them from using intimate details obtained in

auditing and other courses against someone, exactly again like in Catholicism, the priest is forbidden to reveal what he heard in confession.

Though comparing the two systems is a touchy subject, the process is somehow similar also to control in psychoanalysis: some analysts report regularly to a colleague, usually a more experienced one (and pay him/her), concerning their patient's progress in order to make sure they have interpreted his/her narratives in the right manner; if not, they will have to go back to the beginning or the previous stages of the analytic process.

The intense follow-up of the key target of the Church, celebrities, was explained to me by Krystyna Louw in one of the cozy lounges of CC on February 23, 2018. She is Vice-President External of Celebrity Centre International, and was earlier Vice President of all CC in the world except of CC International. She proudly told me she was 87 and in a great shape to keep working full time.

In her words,

I follow the progress of all major celebrities who are on service at our various missions, churches, orgs. I check on all these celebs, 250 of them, every week to make sure they are progressing well and getting good service to keep moving on the Bridge. We know at all time what they are doing. I don't contact the celebrities themselves but the organizations, or whoever is responsible for servicing the celebs.

She went on to narrate her incredible life. In fact she authored her autobiography: *A Special Brand of Courage: a Mother and Her Children's Remarkable Escape from Nazi Germany* (Louw 2010) with the blurb stating: "The story of an extraordinary woman who refuses to succumb to the 'inevitable' and flees Nazi occupied Poland with two children—a journey that brought her love, betrayal and miraculously narrow escapes." She told me the sequel would soon come out. She explained to me how she lived in Poland and had to escape in 1940 with her brother and mother, first to Hungary and then to France, how they had come to the harbor of Bordeaux to try to leave the continent, which they finally did from another harbor, Saint Jean de Luz; they reached London, then the Blitz drove them to Scotland for four years, after which they settled in South Africa. She felt comfortable in Durban, with her father who did tobacco planting in Rhodesia for five years. She met her husband and her son was born.

Concerning her involvement in Scientology, it started there in 1957, in Durban. Then, her son who had married his American wife in Copenhagen lived in Tucson and asked his parents to join him. They did, but nine months later her

husband died. Her son who was going into business on his own as a management consultant asked her to join him. She worked for him for five years. He divorced, married again and now she has six grand-children.

I joined the Sea Org in 1990, my son was expecting it. I joined CC international here. Before I was “giving my wins” in New York City (meaning to disseminate the teachings to help clear the planet). The president of CC told me I would be perfect for the position and so I said, “I am in.”

Considering the wonderful old world grace and genteel refinement she radiated, the story of her promotion did not surprise me at all.

#### — The Symbolical Function of the Churches

Ideal Orgs will feature an LRH Life exhibition, a museum dedicated to the life and work of the founder, and most interestingly, each church harbors the office of LRH. Wherever they be, the offices will necessarily display the same furniture (specific desk, armchair, shelves...) and paraphernalia, with some slight variations in the decoration according to the local setting. The explanation given is that LRH liked having his own office in all the buildings of his organization to which he traveled and so all the churches, that of course he could never know for the most part, will keep an office for him as a tribute, but a tribute only, and all my guides showed me the offices with a good sense of humor.

To the outsider observer, nonetheless, even more so than the LRH Exhibits that are too large to emanate strong symbolism, the ubiquitous office of LRH performs a paramount symbolic function. Scientologists refuse to say that they worship him as if he were a god or a saint and they affirm he is merely their admirable guide and teacher. Yet the always ready-to-function office, closed off by a rope or a chain or even a small wooden barrier as in CC (if I recall properly), so that nobody can get in except the keepers who operate like vestals, evokes the sacred altar space in a Catholic church, sometimes closed off now by a sort of chain when there is no service on, but before Vatican II by a solid communion table.

The LRH office display offers not just fond memorabilia (in fact “recreated” memorabilia), but a sacred space that contains the essence and presence of the founder and guide. This shrine situated at the heart of the churches performs the function of the sacred tabernacle that in ancient Judaism was the tent that carried

the sanctuary enshrining the presence of God among the people, and in Catholicism is the small cabinet enshrining the Holy Host in the monstrance and consecrated hosts. In the three cases, the presence symbolically represented is eternal and ready to manifest itself to the disciples, yet there are nuances. In the Hebrew and Catholic tabernacles, the divine is localized through an act of faith, since by essence it is all surrounding and invisible whereas in the LRH office, LRH is rendered omnipresent materially, somehow like in Egyptian pyramids equipped with all the paraphernalia the deceased will need in the afterlife. The office seems ready to have its fountainhead come back and work at his desk for business as usual.

Mikael Rothstein has carried my analysis further in his article on the “*emblematic architecture*” of the Church (2014). He argues that the buildings of the organization, not just the churches themselves, serve a purpose far more profound than mere historical heritage conservation. He sees the fastidious attention brought to the choice of significant architecture as performing the transfer of the charismatic authority of LRH into and onto the buildings, as displayed in the LRH offices that demonstrate “the adoration of the departed leader.” Like the Christian Church viewed as the extension of the body of Christ, Scientologist buildings “emerge as physical manifestations of Scientological ideals and virtues,” in a case of “charismatic routinization.” Even the “complex social system, which composes Scientology, is understood to be a prolongation of Hubbard himself” (Rothstein 2014, 53–5). The bust of LRH added to the office display after his death makes him “present” even more with the organization “as the limbs and body” attached to it (Rothstein 2014, 58). The author analyses in the following part the issue of LRH’s reincarnation that transpires from various texts. But just like the Christian clergies would not know what to do with an actually resurrected Christ, because he would put them out of work, unless it did signal the very end of the world, the Church of Scientology, while holding reincarnation as a central dogma, would not know what to do with an actually reborn LRH. Thus, it has downplayed the possibility, so that “Hubbard’s current embodiment is the Scientology-organization itself, epitomized not least by its architecture” (Rothstein 2014, 70).

We see how the Church cleverly capitalizes on its vast real estate expansion. The institution strengthens its inscription as a major social and business player in dense urban areas by acquiring strategically positioned historical or semi-

historical buildings that it endows with rich symbolism. The tabernacle is thus totally inscribed into the vernacular of the city, thus combining the social with the spiritual for maximum practical and religious efficiency.

## *II. Demographics: How Do We Count?*

The lavish church planting operations that definitely impose the Church of Scientology as a major player among religious institutions imply a fairly high number of members able to raise huge sums of money for the projects and to maintain them as operational centers. Logically, the material expansion of the institution supposes a proportional increase in the number of active members, all the more so as the activities of the centers must be financed independently from the master Church, which presupposes a balanced ratio between the costs and members. However, estimating their actual number remains somehow a quandary that this chapter addresses.

Assessing membership with precision is a very delicate issue with religious groups in general, and with Scientology in particular because it attracts far more relentless critics that will hammer down their mantra according to which the organization is on the retreat globally and its figures are fake. Yet, we all know that assessing religious membership is often problematic. Some groups will inflate their figures for obvious publicity reasons, but also when figures do correspond to a specific act of belonging, like baptism records, they may not reflect actual practice or even plain belonging. On the other hand, some groups will try to obtain precise figures as they base their budget projections on them. One must also take into account the fact that criteria vary from one group to another: Orthodox churches tend to count family units rather than individuals. In some countries, state-supported churches may count every citizen who does not specifically ask to be withdrawn from the records, etc.

For the current period in time, we do not have precise figures of active Scientologists in the world. In a meeting on February 19, 2018, at Hollywood Guarantee Building to discuss this particular issue, Luis Gonzalez underlined the difficulties in obtaining reliable membership figures because a Scientologist “is the person who says he/she is a Scientologist, there is no fixed way to become a Scientologist. There is no specific ritual when one enters the Church: no baptism

as in Christian Churches or Mormonism, no rolls... nor registration.” So, how can we count?

When, outside the Church, we speak membership figures we mean “exclusive” Scientologists, that is to say people who belong to this religious group only and partake regularly in its activities.

The counting is thus even more complicated since the Church claims that one can keep one’s previous religion and practice Scientology without having to renounce the first one. One must note here that keeping another religion while doing Scientology supposes that one practices Scientology exclusively as a technique to improve one’s performances without delving into its spiritual domain that does differ from that of other religions. I have been told by a member that in practice keeping two religions may become problematic over time, and that allegiance will gradually veer to Scientology only, were it only because of the amount of time regular practice involves. Nominal allegiance may however move to the other competing religion instead.

There are also situations when switching altogether is not felt as desirable by the institution. For example, the African American minister of the Nation of Islam I interviewed explained to me that he remained first and foremost a minister of the Nation while being totally involved in Scientology training. He stressed its positive influence since it had helped him become a better Muslim. I received a similar answer from another member of the Nation in the South Central Community Center. I also saw a Buddhist nun going to take a class at CC one afternoon. Another example was given to me when, on learning that the lady following the Personal Efficiency Course with me was training to teach it in her new mission north of Salt Lake City, I asked her whether she was a Mormon. She was, and thus I wondered if this new religious activity would make her switch allegiance. Her answer was clear and negative: her being a Scientologist instructor in no way countered her creeds and practice as a Mormon.

Now, can we count these people as Scientologists? They probably are counted by the institution, though they are not “exclusively” so. We encounter the same duality with people identifying as Pentecostals but also belonging to other specific denominations, or again people who identify as Christian but also as Buddhist...

From a proselytizing point of view, it is much more useful to see those “semi” Scientologists remain within their original religions because they disseminate the teachings and thus broaden the appeal of the technique. They participate actively in the top down strategy characteristic of several proselytizing religions (like Matteo Ricci’s technique noted above), but unlike most of those religions, Scientology does not require exclusiveness, which renders it far more adaptable and less risky for potential recruits.

Also, there are people who practice Scientology outside the Church, a group named the Freezone. They can be counted as Scientologists but they are not members of the major institution itself, and the same rumor of fuzzy numbers circulates about them.

What is fastidiously recorded by the Church is the number of people who take courses or buy books (I will give figures in the following part). Yet, the Church authorities do know it is insufficient to track regular members for one may take a series of courses, and leave altogether, or come back several years later for more courses so that it is incorrect to count such fragmentary following as membership. Consequently the Church does not quantify its membership figures more precisely than “in the millions.”

Observers who claimed much lower estimates based their own assessment on interpretations of the stats by ARIS, the American Religion Survey (the link of which is given by the US Census Bureau, see Kosmin and Keysar 2009). The Census’ “Search Results for Scientology” give stats listed according to the ARIS 2001 Codebook, with the findings of the same year 2001, which then does not help us move ahead to know about the more recent years. The ARIS 2001 stats detail the number of Scientologists by State, with the majority in California (5034), then Florida (2627) and a total nationwide of 50,281 for 2001 then.

But, as Introvigne explains in his own paper on counting Scientologists (2017), in its following study, ARIS included Scientology in the broad category of new religions and other religions without specific counting, so that there are in fact no specific figures for Scientology in the 2008 survey. Finally, I was told that a further development took place after a Church researcher spoke with Dr. Barry Kosmin, the author of the ARIS Survey, in May 2011, and learned that, because of the methods of counting, Kosmin had tried to not give out any of the figures gathered on the smaller religions because he knew they could not be accurate. For Scientology, he admitted that he was sure there were more Scientologists in



the U.S. because they had at least a “whole town in Florida.” And he told her that he had said so many times when asked. Introvigne in fact mentions a mail he received from Kosmin on May 5, 2017, warning against using ARIS data to claim that Scientology’s membership is declining, and stating that “we never reported adherent figures for small religious groups in ARIS 2008 because of their unreliability. We were approached by several scholars and media outlets interested in Scientology. Our informal response—*caveat emptor*—was that our data suggested 25,000 +/- 300,000” (Introvigne 2017). Because of such problems with minority groups, the Census Bureau also removed them from the lists. It thus removed any mention of a membership number for the Church of Scientology from the official Census report as is visible on its website that indeed shows no mention of the Church.

We do have exact figures for the staff: as of 2018, the correct exact total number of Church staff is 27,355, including Sea-Org staff, but not the people out on missions. In Russia for instance there are supposed to be 57 missions but the figures are impossible to check because they are staffed by volunteers. The total staff of Flag in Florida is 6,628. The total staff in Hollywood (Los Angeles) including Sea-Org staff is 5,489 (figures given to me in November 2018).

We know that the only reliable method to get exact numbers for any given religious group is to actually go to services and count. But this is only possible for groups that run public services, which is not the case with Scientology. So what is needed is a count by the institution itself of how many people take first level course, how many move on to the next level, etc., how many people reach the different OT levels, how many have to go to Flag to follow the upper levels etc. The counting is in reality very complex since the progression is not always strictly vertical, with people doing several types of courses at the same time.

There are in fact areas of the world where the counting has been most precise, in Israel for example. The MEIDA Center at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute published a full report in 2014 (last updated May 2016: Klin-Oron and Yisraeli 2016) on the membership of the local Church and as it is only in Hebrew, one of the authors Adam Klin-Oron, translated the summary for me.

The report we compiled on Scientology in Israel has statistics that were provided by the local Scientology Center, but that seem to us to be quite accurate.

As of 2014, about 1,200 people were listed either training to be auditors or to be Clear and that were in contact with the Center. This is what you would call “members of Scientology in

Israel,” more or less. They claim that since they opened in Israel, in 1976, they had a total of 2,500 people who trained to be auditors or worked to be Clear, which means that once someone has taken a course with them they keep counting that person as interested for a long time.

Indeed, at the moment, only 120 were actively training to be Clear, and 75 to be auditors. So the 1,200 are people that have already invested time and money, but are not necessarily very active at the moment. Furthermore, since Scientology began operating in Israel (1976), about 70 Israelis have reached the status of Clear, 90 the status of Operating Thetans, and 70 have completed training as auditors.

As for public interest, since 1976 around 40,000 Israelis either participated in a basic course or purchased a book.

So if you count those that reached Clear (70) or OT (90), those who completed training as auditors (70), those that are working towards being Clear at the moment (120), or training to be auditors at the moment (75), you get a total of 425 hardcore Israeli Scientologists, and this assuming that there are no double numbers (people who are Clear and also auditors, for instance), and that all of these are still in Israel at the moment (Adam Klin-Oron, personal communication, September 21, 2018).

Other minute figures can be consulted for Clearwater: the Church revealed precise numbers of visitors to the University of Florida for the CEFA report (Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis), mentioned above in the section on the economic fallout from architectural renovation. Yet, the figures are only those of national or international members coming to Clearwater temporarily and, as specified, these may come several times during the year. Furthermore the figures only offer a small window on the global membership since going to Clearwater is not strictly reserved to the top OT levels for lower level members can also go there for training.

The 2014 CEFA study (Harrison et al.) reports these figures for visitors:

In 2013, there were 9,148 different visitors (from state, national and international destinations) who visited the Church in Clearwater to participate in various religious training or counseling – some of them on multiple occasions.

The survey also shows the visitors’ demographics and spending patterns:

in addition to the United States (54.9 percent), most visitors come from Italy (7.5 percent), Germany (4.3 percent), Russia (4.1 percent), Switzerland (3.3 percent), Taiwan (3.0 percent), Canada (3.0 percent), France (2.4 percent), and the United Kingdom (2.1 percent). (Based on a Church survey of 8,052 visitors to Flag from October 2013 through April 2014.) Nationally, most visitors come from the states of: California (34 percent), Florida (20 percent), Washington (5.7 percent), Georgia (4 percent), New York and Texas

(both 2.8 percent), and Michigan, Nevada and Oregon (all 2.3 percent) (CEFA page 15. Pages 14-15 display a world map with details for various countries not listed above).

The figures confirm my observation in Clearwater in January 2016 where I was impressed by the number of Italian families with young children, clearly the majority of visitors and the Germans as second group, but less visible.

Since we do have verifiable figures coming from several churches that do assess how many people take such and such courses, it would seem that the institution would only have to add the numbers reported by all the churches to give global figures; they may someday be published.

As a form of conclusion to this chapter, we need to say that whatever the exact total number of Scientologists, the visible expansion of the Church, the one in the real estate domain as seen previously and in the dissemination of LRH material as will be explored in the following chapter, has led to a much better name recognition of the Church. Michael Connelly, for one, regularly mentions Scientologists in his books that are for the most set in LA, as for example in *Angels Flight* where he describes them as guarding their Hollywood Bld. building during the 1992 riots (Connelly 1999, 206).

All the people I have spoken to over the years have underlined the much better organization and reputation of their Church. For example, Krystyna Louw, at CC, answered my final questions with enthusiasm. She summarized the evolutions she had witnessed that in her eyes were due to the improvement not just of the management of the institution but of the quality of the services offered to the public:

A lot of changes then occurred inside the Church. Things are more structured, because we now have the facilities and the people who are supposed to hold positions. Before we did not have enough staff. You have now the security of knowing that things are getting better and better all the time. Look at the ideal orgs that are being opened: people come overnight and see what they are doing! For example, take our Nashville mission. It had six staff and then the whole mission came from Sea Org, we had more and more people coming in. We bought the building, expanded it. It is on Music Row.

I see a bright future for Scientology for it is the answer to people's problems in life. Whatever problem you have there is a solution in Scientology. I have not seen anything that LRH said that has not come true. It was quite a struggle in the beginning, but now it is exciting.

She then gave me several examples of churches being opened in different parts of the world as proof of the expansion of the Church and through it a promising future for the whole world.

Lance Miller is another one of those members who stressed this positive evolution, in the interview I had with him at the LA church at PAC on February, 12, 2018, in the evening.

When asked about the changes he has witnessed over his three decades as a Scientologist, he answered that, apart from the continuous improvement of the material to facilitate teaching, the major development has been the positive recognition of the Church. First, he pointed to the very building in which we were and said that it was originally a hospital and when the Church purchased it, it was upgraded to be now an iconic building. He himself was in the forefront of the team fighting for recognition. “In the 1980s the Church was very small, whereas now I see new people all the time. Also I am amazed that where ever I go, I run into people who are very favorable to COS.” Today, most people are no longer critical of Scientology:

When I walk as a Scientologist, nobody minds people like me, they are far more accepting. What we are seeing with the expansion of our Church, is that people who take courses become more and more able, and outsiders realize this.

When I was younger, once I was in a bar in the Valley, somebody said, “You are a Scientologist” and everybody looked at me. I asked, “What do you know about the Church of Scientology?” The guy said, “My boss has been studying with it for two years,” and I asked, “Is he better?” and the man said, “Yes, much better.” So the man who had first “attacked” me finally realized that Scientology was good.

Another testimony came from Lisa Malm, the president of Women’s Auxiliary, a foundation that will be presented in the fourth section. I met her on the same day, February 12, 2018, over lunch in her Glendale home, which was a perfect way to see that Scientology does not bankrupt its members, since the house is superb and the whole family is “exclusive Scientologist.”

She has been in the Church for 46 years. Her father was a Yale geology professor. She encountered the teachings of Scientology through a friend of her sister’s. Since she has been with the Church for several decades, she has been able to witness the major changes it has undergone. She confirmed what I would hear every day: it is just night and day between forty years ago and now. In the early days, the Church was not very well known, whereas now it benefits from broader

name recognition, in a very positive way so that there are far fewer negative reactions.

The members are seen as independent, entrepreneurial people who care for their family. People say: “You are always helping, you are energetic, and always having a good time.” Indeed when people know us, they realize we are very different from what they get in the media.

Yet, the early period had its own advantages for members in so far as “its missions were very small so that you knew everybody, let’s say 98% of the members, now I barely know 2% of all the members in the area.”

Lance Miller and Lisa Malm, like all the adults I spoke to, have been in the Church for more than 20 years, and in fact all joined as young adults, and the younger ones I met were born in Scientologist families. It seems clear that over the last decades in the USA, and particularly in California, the Church has appealed to quite a large segment of the upwardly mobile young people who might have become successful entrepreneurs without joining the Church, as so many of their fellow citizens have done, but who do feel it was specifically their practicing Scientology that led them to material prosperity and physical and spiritual wellbeing.

In Europe as well, and in France in particular, I have witnessed the improvement of the image of the Church over the past twenty years: it has moved from radical antagonism to milder suspicion, and more often than not now to genuine curiosity. The major actors of this evolution have been the French PR authorities, Danièle Gounord, Martine Rhein and Éric Roux whose strategy has been to meet people, give lectures, open the centers to students of religions and observers and explain away the specificities of their community. As Éric Roux told me:

France has changed now as regards Scientology. Prejudice still exists, but the general hostility that was created by a few people and forwarded by the medias seem to have fizzled out. One major proof that it has changed is that I have been able to organize events openly with mainstream stakeholders of French society, such as mainstream journalists, members of the Council of State (Conseil d’État, the administrative Supreme Court in France) and others of that kind (see EIFRF 2015).

Another important step for Roux was to have his two books on Scientology published, and to have the first one prefaced by Michel de Guillenchmidt, a former Councilor of State and high level civil servant, and Dean of the University

Paris Descartes. It covers the attacks the Church was the butt of, *Inquisition en bande organisée* (“Inquisition by ruffians”) (Roux 2012b). The second book bears on the functioning and doctrine of the Church. While the first one in 2012 was boycotted by the big bookstores, such as the FNAC, due to the belonging of the author to “une secte,” the second one in 2018 made it to the “Selection FNAC” shelves, while being for a while a bestseller on Amazon in the category Sociology of Religion.

### *III. The Word: Dissemination and Preservation for All Eternity*

Religions start and grow according to the efficiency the founders and leaders will achieve in spreading the messages they have received or produced. If in the early days it was simply through oral transmission, then writing and iconography, in our times the radio, television and more recently the “transcendent” Internet have multiplied exponentially the speed of transmission and proved providential tools to spread most diligently messages to the members and beyond in order to expand their reach (this new field has been analyzed in depth by scholars such as Douglas Cowan, Lorne Dawson, Jeff Hadden [1937–2003: Hadden and Cowan 1999, Dawson and Cowan 2004], Sophia Marriage, Jean-François Mayer [2008], Jolyon P. Mitchell [Mitchell and Marriage 2003], and the authors of the *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture...*). The media will also facilitate the interaction between the religious groups and the outside world for, unless they adamantly choose separatism, they function as social entities avid to participate in the life of the city, for example in their publicizing their own social actions. Religious institutions have curtailed the danger of seeing the media play against them (the relation between the religious realm and the medias in general has always remained ambiguous) by strategically operating their own media, printed press, radio and television channels, and so on, thereby controlling information from top to bottom.

As a rule, American religions dwarf their Old World sisters and competitors with their massive media investments. If the televangelical phenomenon is the best-known success story in this domain, it is just but one of the most visible actors among the religious media giants. Though it is difficult to compare budgets, the Church of Scientology is clearly a major player in the field. Its specificity seems to be that it uses the media not just to disseminate the messages

of the founder, but as a religious tool, in keeping with Marshall McLuhan's (1911–1980) “the medium is the message,” for Scientologists claim that communication is the very tool ushering in the Golden Age of Knowledge.

To help members and potential neophytes reach this spiritual goal, the institution has achieved a massive expansion of its communication apparel in the last few years in keeping with the heritage of LRH who penned or spoke thousands of texts and lectures. Two major specialties are the unwavering focus on print, books and glossy magazines and the videos all perfectly calibrated to catch the attention of American viewers, notably the young ones. The Church also relies intensively on the Internet. Donald Westbrook has studied its use by parishioners as a means to expand “an ongoing public relations war, and thus to be poised to legitimate Scientology to outsiders” in an intense PR war (Westbrook 2018b). The very publicized opening in March 2018 of the television channel crowned the expansion of the recent years.

A presentation of three large facilities that are exclusively dedicated to the dissemination of the teachings of LRH and that have undergone recent transformations will be followed by an analysis of the very fountainhead of such dissemination activity, the Preservation of the Tech campaign.

## 1. Ever Expanding Media Productions and Dissemination Centers

— Scientology Media Productions, Global Media Center (4401 West Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles)

In the tradition of Scientologist acquisitions, the building was originally KCET Studios (which was Public Television of Los Angeles), home to Monogram Pictures and Allied Artists, and it dates back to 1912. It was restored after its purchase in 2011 for \$42 million (Miller 2011, 2). When it opened, it was depicted in these terms:

It contains a multi-platform, totally reinvented and restored motion picture and television studio. The focal point of Golden Era Productions is the 80,000-square-foot film studio. The main sound stage rises more than three stories, with an interior the size of a football field.

Or,

Where the Golden Age of Hollywood's past merges with the most advanced state-of-the-art technology of today to help build a better world for tomorrow. Designed for global communication across every conceivable media channel—there is simply no other facility like it on Earth.

Its activities:

Sound stages, visual effects, editing, animation, recording, mixing, broadcasting, foreign language translation and dubbing, every aspect of production and publishing on one self-contained lot. With state-of-the-art facilities for every form of media—film, television, Internet, social media networks, podcasts, streaming video, radio, cable, satellite—and adaptable to any future development in media production (Scientology 2018c).

— Television Station

Being there when the staff was finalizing the opening of the television channel, I could measure the intensity of the preparation and the enthusiasm over what the new medium entailed in terms of visibility. For starters, the opening on March 12, 2018 was reported in most international newspapers. The programs showcase the activities of the Church as a global organization, in particular those of the foundations: they “present its social betterment programs that have touched the lives of millions.” On its website, the channel is said to have “been praised for shattering the paradigm of religious broadcasting, ushering in a new era that shows a religion in action, making the world better.”

There are also entertainment shows and investigations, etc. In keeping with what the institution organizes for fiction writers, the channel will give visibility to independent filmmakers by broadcasting their films and documentaries that may not be accepted by other channels. It is presented as “providing a platform for those advocating social betterment, human rights and interfaith work, to give a voice to those who might not otherwise have one across the airwaves.” The plan is “to air poignant, uplifting films on important social issues that underscore the goodness of the human spirit and show how determined individuals can make a difference.”

In October 2018, a new season opened with some sixty episodes. In its first six months, “the Network was viewed in 237 countries and territories worldwide in 17 languages spotlighting the lives of Scientologists.” The goal is not to “preach but, instead, through its dynamic selection of programs, simply show the religion, its members and its work, so that viewers can see for themselves.” It is accessible



on satellite TV and through live streaming via: Scientology.tv, Apple tv, Amazon Fire tv, Roku, Mobile apps and more platforms are envisaged for the coming months (Scientology 2018d).

— The International Dissemination and Distribution Center (6130 Sheila Street, Los Angeles, CA 90040, in the district called Commerce)

It was opened in 2010. The building is huge: 185,000 square feet. It is one of those impressive rectangular warehouses concentrated in the city of Commerce that one sees from the plane on approaching LAX from the East. It pairs with the Bridge Publication facilities close by. The institution runs the gamut from inception to production process. Instead of depending on outside providers, printers or distributors, it now processes everything in house, which reduces time and money. The hyper automation plus the fact that the staff are Scientologists explain the reduced costs of the whole process as exemplified with the drug education booklets: “for the same it previously cost to produce 3.5 million drug education booklets, the Church can now produce 35 million and reach 10 times the number of at-risk youth.” Every step is automated, for example the “mailing system that can address 150,000 pieces every eight hours,” as well as the shipping line that will ship more than 500,000 boxes and individual items each week.”

The dissemination center manufactures 75,000 items in some 50 languages: the magazines, the printed leaflets and booklets promoting the various humanitarian programs of the Church, yellow uniforms of the volunteers in the various humanitarian branches of the Church, banners, decorations with the logos of the Church, etc. It organizes the distribution and the administration of the process that feeds all the missions and churches of the institution in the world. It features a custom-built 121-ton web press that can print 55,000 pages per hour (Scientology 2018e).

— Bridge Publications (5600 E. Olympic Blvd., Commerce City, CA 90022)

Even though Scientology greatly values media technology, it has retained a profound respect for the printed word, so that in a time when authors and publishers bemoan the decline of the text on paper, the reverse has been happening in Scientology. In the last decades, the printing process has been

considerable expanded and accelerated by the new gigantic printing facilities of Bridge Publications in the city of Commerce that I visited in February 2018 with two more people. Our guide gave us roughly the same figures and explanations as Noelle Skodzinski, the journalist of the professional journal *Book Business*, was given by Blake Silber who has been the president of the company since 2009.

Golden Era Productions prints and translates in some 50 languages L. Ron Hubbard's non-fiction books (his fiction books are taken care of by another center, ASI, that will be presented below), that is to say his religious books, plus audiobooks, recorded lectures and training films, and Church videos, magazines and websites. Bridge Publications is exclusively the publishing branch for Dianetics and Scientology books, lectures and course packs for the Americas, Asia and Africa. Europe as well as Russia (or Commonwealth of Independent Countries), India and the Middle East are serviced by New Era Publications based in Copenhagen (that publishes also Hubbard's non-fiction works). Asked if other authors were published there, Blake Silber answered no:

With over 5,000 writings and 3,000 recorded lectures published in multiple languages, the volume of demand for [L. Ron Hubbard's] works means his materials comprise the full scope of our publications. For example, the book *Dianetics* has now sold over 21 million copies alone (Skodzinski 2010).

When we were discussing membership figures, Luis Gonzalez gave me the records of books sold over the last few years with this affirmation: "One key figure is the number of books sold, because one cannot be a Scientologist if we don't read books." Though it remains impossible to figure out exact membership from the numbers of books sold since a single member will buy many and since not all buyers will be Scientologists, some numbers need to be given here so as to fathom with precision the intense printing activity of the Church.

It is obvious that the sales increase at an extremely fast rate. The first kept records of all the books sold by Bridge and ERA Publication (sales through other sellers are not included) run from 24 December 1998 to 4 January 2007: the number of Scientology and Dianetics L. Ron Hubbard Books sold to individuals was 21,926,726 books in ten years. The numbers are weekly cumulative and when the records started, the week of December 24 saw 41,508 books sold. Whereas when the new counting began, the week of January 4, 2007, 116,282 books were sold. From January 4, 2007 to February 15, 2018: 79,579,071 books altogether were sold in ten years.

Even if each Scientologist buys several books, that is still quite a lot for each if there are fewer than one million members as some people assert.

The facilities moved to Commerce in 1991; in 2003 the company purchased a large digital press, and an even more impressive expansion took place in 2006 when all the activities were gathered under one single humongous 276,000-square-foot roof. Our guide showed us the process and the clever rationalization of the whole facility. We were given mind-boggling figures (I come from a family that has always run a village printing shop so that I know all the process quite well but with Lilliputian figures).

Here too, all the steps are produced in house: printing, foiling, embossing, laminating, CD replication, packaging and shipping. Like in the Dissemination Center, everything is automated with kilometer long machines churning out bound or glued books (6,000 can be bound every hour), and others spitting out CDs (one million a week).

The staff (175 employees) may have to work extra hours and weekends to answer demand. Like the journalist, I was explained that

the average print run is about 5,000, but this varies depending on the title and language. Digital printing enables us to fill demand, be it 50 copies or 20,000, and all with the same cost to us and our customers. [It] allows us to maintain a “shelf quantity” of all needed titles, and only print and supply based on demand (Skodzinski 2010).

David Miscavige presented the plant in his article “Answering the Global Demand”:

In combination, Bridge and New Era can print 1.3 million books and 1 million compact discs a week. Annually, that amounts to 67 million books and 52 million CDs... Add in paperbacks and course packs, and the printed pages placed end to end would extend to the moon and back. With digital printing and print-on-demand, production has soared and keeps pace with the demand. Eighty million L. Ron Hubbard books and lectures were distributed from 2004-2009 alone, more than in the previous 50 years—and 70 million from 2007-2010 (Scientology 2018f).

The *Book Business* article confirmed the affirmation of the Church that this is indeed “the world’s largest all-digital print-on-demand publishing plant” and that its equipment and staff are definitely excellent. To the journalist’s question on revenues generated by printed books, Blake Silber answered: “Income from books has averaged 33 percent of our total income, while Audio Visual products (including CDs and DVDs) constitute 67 percent.” The first sales outlets are the

Church's missions and churches, plus BridgePub.com and major booksellers, as well as online retailers. E-books are also produced. To the question "What makes Bridge successful?" Silber answered:

Putting in a full in-house digital manufacturing plant allowed us to complete a massive undertaking to release all of Mr. Hubbard's works [in multiple languages]. This ... created a dramatically increased demand for his materials. ... This, along with our ability to reach the public in countries that never had access to Mr. Hubbard's works before, has fueled the recent success of Bridge (Skodzinski 2010).

Luis Gonzalez gave me copies of the certificates that such flurry of activity honored: the Guinness Book of Records has granted LRH "The most translated novelist in the world" award several times. For 2005, it was for the fact that his novels had been translated into 57 languages. In 2006 the certificate spelled out: "The most published works by one author is 1,084 by L. Ron Hubbard (USA) whose first work was published in July 1938 and the last in March 2006."

I have visited the large printing and distribution facilities of other religious groups, notably those of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville and those of Norman Vincent Peale's (1898–1993) *Guideposts*. I must say that even though these centers were very large, I did not perceive them as being as huge and as impeccably state-of-the-art as those of the Church of Scientology.

The staff justify such frantic activity to produce huge quantities of printed material along with an equally intense digital dissemination by the profound reverence for the words of the founder and the evangelical urge to spread the good news to all, which is what led President David Miscavige to make sure that what was revered was the actual words written or pronounced by LRH, and not some corrupted versions. This is how the Preservation of the Tech program was initiated.

## 2. Preserving the Word for All Eternity by the Church of Spiritual Technology

In the preface to Éric Roux's book in French on the doctrines and functioning of the Church, Frédéric-Jérôme Pansier states that the study will reveal how "Scientology, like all other religions, is the Word and the interpretation of the Word" (in Roux 2018, 11, my translation). He goes on to underline the superiority of Scientology over older religious systems because of the possibility each member has to access the very fundamentals thanks to the audio recordings of

the prophet's teachings. No pondering on ancient scriptures relayed long after their actual oral delivery and necessarily altered by memory and evolving settings is now needed: the Scientologist interprets directly the source words: "The person who embarks in Scientology must perfect his/her knowledge by listening to the word. Truth is not revealed but built by the listener" (in Roux 2018, 12).

Indeed, the Word reigns supreme in the Church: as all my respondents explained to me, what matters most for Scientologists is the certainty that they are pursuing their individual progression according to the very fundamentals of the whole system, that is to say the teachings of LRH in his very own wordings, and that the most faithful accuracy of what he wrote and said is preserved. The intensive program that ran for over ten years to "preserve the Tech" allows us to rank the Church as a "fundamentalist" group *sensu stricto*. We are dealing here forcefully with the mystical streak of the movement couched in technical vocabulary and process.

The mastermind of the operation was David Miscavige, the Chairman of the Board of the Religious Technology Center (RTC) that Hubbard established to manage all the trademarks of the Church. It is part of CST, Church of Spiritual Technology, an autonomous Church of Scientology that is not a part of CSI, Church of Scientology International, itself a separate corporation, the mother Church.

RTC is thus the very body that guards the authenticity of the doctrine, called the Tech for it is thanks to technology, that of the e-meter and that of the understanding of the functioning of the mind, that the doctrine can be applied, as we know. As keeper of the Tech or of the Doctrine of the Faith as would be said in another religion, David Miscavige suspected members might have encountered problems with the materials they used because it had not been properly validated as emanating accurately from the mouth of LRH.

For the technology of the mind to really help people perfect themselves in their gnosis-like undertakings, they have to follow the tech explained by the very exact words pronounced or penned by LRH. To outsiders, this veers on actually worshipping him as a divinely inspired prophet. But not at all, do members reply, it is simply because he held the truth, he alone, yet this was not to be turned into a deity himself, but to help people perfect themselves. He only had the key that he taught in thousands of texts and talks. David Miscavige decided to track all the

wrong interpretations or spellings that had crept into the printed texts of LRH's own words:

The operation was launched in 2005 and a major part was completed in 2015 thanks to the technology to preserve for all eternity the words, written and spoken, of LRH. The preservation is still going on (Luis Gonzales, February 19, 2018).

There were two areas where to correct the past mistakes that had crept into the tech Hubbard had conceived: the audio and the printed collections.

1. His audio recordings were gradually being corrupted because of aging support. To correct this, technicians developed, with the industry, newer and safe methods to eliminate all parasites from the sound track and also, and almost more importantly, to preserve the Voice for eternity. This is what the authorities have entitled "Cutting-Edge Film Restoration & Preservation." The project, as detailed by David Miscavige, followed these steps:

The last decade saw the restoration and release of L. Ron Hubbard filmed lectures and an exclusive interview with Mr. Hubbard. The first to be restored was the Clearing Congress films, a series of six lectures delivered in Washington, D.C. in 1958. The next release, in 2006, was the only filmed interview of L. Ron Hubbard, An Introduction to Scientology shot in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1966. The final restoration was completed and released in 2008, the Classification and Gradation film—shot at the Scientology headquarters in Sussex, England in 1965. The condition of these films had greatly deteriorated over the ensuing years. The project to fully restore and preserve them was initiated by Mr. David Miscavige and carried out by a 70-person team in Golden Era Productions' film lab. All told, more than 620,000 frames of the original negatives were digitally scanned, meticulously cleaned by hand and fully restored. The result: Scientologists and the general public now and for all time can experience these seminal lecture series and the exclusive L. Ron Hubbard interview for themselves (Scientology 2018g).

2. The printed words: except for *Dianetics* that LRH typed himself, he would dictate his texts and the transcriptions contained errors, either because secretaries took them in short hand, with the obvious mistakes made when the notes were developed afterwards, or because people did not take the words properly. Those errors made it difficult to study because at times the text was incomprehensible. LRH authored 19 course books and 1494 lectures defining the fundamentals of theology including ACC, Advanced Clinical Courses.

The solution was to compare both the original voice and the printed text for one, and compare his original manuscripts with the printed material. All the

notations that LRH had penned on the printed books had been kept and served as a template for many corrections. All the editorial comments he made have now been integrated in the final and definitive publication.

A huge warehouse was used for this operation, with tables hundreds of yards long lined with all the manuscripts. This required the work of large teams of volunteers who scrutinized everything to track the errors, however marginal they might be.

As Luis Gonzales told me:

Our technology is now fully restored to its original truth. It is the fulfillment of LRH wish: we are for the first time reversing the current of the usual disintegrating way our society was going: now people can get as good as they want. The Golden Age of Knowledge is now made possible, and to make a comparison, for us, it is a benediction.

More emphatically David Miscavige wrote in the article “A Renaissance for Scientology”: “It is the single most embracive RTC program in history and reflects hundreds of thousands of hours of scriptural verification and restoration” (Scientology 2018h).

The recourse to the term “scriptural” with its double meaning of “simple writing” and “holy scripture” attests to what in the minds of Scientologists is the profound sacrality of the enterprise. For them indeed, when all the errors were corrected, the Golden Age of Knowledge was open. The concept has led several scholars to call Scientology “technological gnosis” (see Melton 2000, 2009; Terrin 2014). The implicit allusion to “the dawn of the golden age” is a clear reminder also of the Golden Dawn esoteric movement of the 19th century (critics have loved digging into this), also alluded to in the course series called Golden Dawn lectures. The Golden Age is earthly paradise, the perfect society implemented by Scientologists themselves who, through the knowledge they have mastered of their own mind and self, are able to empower themselves endlessly in their daily activities and ideals.

All the Scientologists I interviewed confirmed this point. All were high achievers and said that their success was due to Scientology, for if they had triumphed over all hurdles and reached the higher levels of their specific fields it was only thanks to their abiding by the rigorous steps of the tech. A specialist of communication, a singer, a magician and a medical doctor give their views here.

Lance Miller is a parishioner whose specialty is giving talks on speech communication, a field he is most gifted at: he won a championship in Toastmasters.

As he explained to me,

When I am out in the world I don't speak about Scientology, I speak about communication and leadership: the importance of storytelling, and how to practice speaking; how to uplift the audience. I teach about clarity, and about the concept of team-building.

He has given some 5000 presentations in 25 years. Many of his talks bear on human rights. He works with corporations to build a positive environment that can be open to help people be successful. Lance works also as a business consultant. He summarized his vocation as "helping people being themselves."

He has been with the Church for 31 years. He arrived in Los Angeles in 1984 from a small town south of Fort Wayne, Indiana. He read the book by LRH *The Problems of Work* and he liked it so much that he inquired about it and started taking one course, then looked for another one. In particular he took a course on communication and he "had such a win on that, that I said, this is what I want to do, I want to become active in the Church."

He then went back home to Indiana, and talked about all this to his parents. His mother did some research, read all the negative articles on Scientology and she contacted the anti-cult network, CAN. The people there told her to cut his telephone, to take his car keys... His dad told him "I want you to look at the other side." "It took me two days to figure out I had to go."

Before leaving, he told his parents they had to solve this problem themselves.

He then had a lot of support from the Church, but it took some two years to solve the issue, because his parents kept reporting to CAN everything he was doing. He felt that

it was like converting to Judaism and they were talking to the Nazis... That is to say not really the best people to inquire from. But then, as I was a national spokesperson debating tax policy, my dad liked that.

Lance added that there are still some similar cases of parents' refusing their children's choice of life occurring today but not many, and it is often because parents are too over reaching, whereas, as the Church recommends, individuals must live their purpose in life.



In 1998, Lisa Goodman contacted him to start the Foundation for Human Rights and Tolerance. The following year, he organized marathons for six to eight weeks in the USA, England, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Austria, Greece... These were relay races to promote human rights, and the runners held a torch, to refer to the concept of the Olympics. Runners expressed a common bond for fairness.

The marathon stopped in 2002 to build a new type of activity. In 2003, Lance and his aides built the Human Rights Office in Belgium, with the idea that this would give the potential to do the runs worldwide.

Other developments have followed with the ever improving infrastructure that the Church put in place:

Now we have the correct material, and the experience is so positive and we have enough staff to help people. In an ideal church there are 150 people, which is ten times more than in a normal church. All these people have to be trained and we are operating as a professional team, so that the experience can be very positive for people who come in. Furthermore, there is more and more material available.

He then listed all the programs: Narconon, Criminon, The Way to Happiness for which a booklet was published. He and his partners had to find a way to integrate it into the teachings, to make it a useful tool. This preoccupation led to the opening in 2003 of a specific building at 201 Broadway in Glendale [a building that I visited a few days later] where the booklets are prepared.

Caralyn Bell Percy, a major singer, whom I will quote more at length in the section on The Way to Happiness, summarized what others voiced:

When LRH passed away, I wondered what was going to happen, but with Mr. Miscavige the Church started to expand around the Basics, that is to say the study of the original writings, and how we should use studying. When this was released, we started to study, but we know we are not supposed to just study, we are meant to *use* the teaching in our daily life. This really strengthened our religion. We really know what we are supposed to do with the words. The churches are much nicer too, in the old days you would not take people there, now you are happy to show the churches. The staff even is better looking.

Like Caralyn, Stan Gerson and Alf Garbutt are major artists in their respective fields (magic and physiotherapy) who took the time to speak with me at length, not in the interview mode but in a more relaxed manner. In what is still rather unthinkable on my side of the Atlantic, the web site of Stan Gerson has three sections to activate: Real Estate, Magic, Scientology. He explained to me that his

main job was real estate broker for Beitler Commercial Realty Services in Sherman Oaks, and according to the amount of transactions he has helped come through, he ranks among the top ones in Southern California. He has been a Scientologist for decades and is a Volunteer Minister. I must say that it was his third hat that fascinated me most, “Magician.”

I first saw him performing at the Magic Castle, which is this unique private club in Hollywood, where one can only go if one is a member or invited by one. I was fortunate to know someone there who obtained an invitation for myself and three other friends. For those who have not been privy to this mecca of magic, let’s say that the castle harbors a couple of theaters for 50 to 80 people, but mostly a labyrinth of corridors and small lounges where magicians will be plying their trade, with maybe only 2 or 3 people watching. As we were going from one individual show to another, we stopped in a crowded lounge where a magician was doing all kinds of legerdemain but mostly mind reading. We became his “victims” and were amazed at what he could guess since we definitely were not his accomplices. We told him so when we met him afterwards in the in house restaurant. It turned out he was a Scientologist and accepted to come speak with me the following day (being a Scientologist is not a rarity there: one magician even made fun of his audience who “were not as quick as Scientologists to calculate numbers”).

I again told him how we had found that he was better than the other magicians, except for one. He claimed that his quality rested in his being a Scientologist, because the training he got and keeps getting through auditing and the courses allows him to calculate tricks far quicker than most magicians, and mostly to know the functioning of the mind process so well (a Scientologist specialty as we know) that he could anticipate very rapidly the responses of the audience and thus trick them. When I asked whether he was using telepathy to read our minds or invented tricks to fool us, he had this wonderful answer: “It is an art.” And he used his art once more on my hands to leave me astounded.

The other high achiever I want to mention here is Alf Garbutt, whom I met in Montrose. He is a doctor in chiropractic and a specialist in therapeutic and clinical nutrition, physical and neuromuscular rehabilitation, sports medicine, pain management and disability analysis. For each of these disciplines he trained in the best and most expensive colleges in the country. His college years, internship and career show an impressive series of rewards. His biography on line

follows what he said to me: he studied in the prestigious college that started chiropractic. There, he says, because and only because he was trained in Scientology, he could attend more hours of extra classes than any other student, and has continued this practice with over 5,000 hours of postgraduate and extracurricular courses. This extra training, he told me, has made him one of the most highly board certified chiropractic doctors on the planet. He has board certification in pain management, rehabilitation, nutrition, and chiropractic sports medicine. In addition to this, he is one of the most highly trained doctors in the Los Angeles area in regards to motor vehicle collision injuries, with advanced certification from the Spine Research Institute of San Diego. While at Palmer, he received the top intern status in the outpatient clinic. In 1978, he earned the Outstanding Graduate Award from the world's largest healing arts college, Palmer College of Chiropractic. For over 40 years, he has lectured in many parts of the United States and trains students in methods that he has mastered or developed to treat people.

He was the American Chiropractic Association Rehabilitation Council's 2010 Chiropractor of The Year. His practice is very famous in the Glendale and Foothill area, what my friends in La Crescenta (who are not Scientologists) confirmed. His explanation is that it was thanks to the Tech that he could follow so many programs, one after the other or even in parallel. I must add that aside from his professional obligations, he is also very active in the Church. He stands as the perfect example of the super empowered individual the Church claims its technology can help anyone to become.

All these intense Scientologists had a single regret, that not everyone followed the same practice to better the world. Indeed, as all religious groups need crusades to bind members in a common effort, the campaign to go back to the source and correct all the possible mistakes that might have crept into the Word not only strengthened the cohesion of the members but, once completed, multiplied their energy to spread the good news.

The strict religious fundamentalism the preservation of the tech entails is rather impressive. It is explicit in the discourse around it as we have just seen and in even more so in its climactic expression, the museification of the Word powerfully imbued with mystical aura.

— The Shrine of the Word

What I term the “Shrine of the Word” is located on the top floor of the Hollywood Savings & Loan building. Once more, it is a historical building that was formerly a bank right downtown Hollywood (at 7051 Hollywood Boulevard). Established in 1981, it houses ASI, the Author’s Service, that is the library of Hubbard’s fiction—his novels, short stories, music... —and its promotion. The center also runs the organization of “The Writers and Illustrators of the Future Contests,” two programs to encourage novelists and illustrators and have them run for prizes. Photos of the participants and copies of their books are displayed. A small theater will host public readings and various shows. The place is very interesting: for one, it is described as “unique among literary agencies, exclusively representing one single bestselling author, L. Ron Hubbard,” but it also deviates from this LRH solo promotion to show the strong interest LRH and his heirs have actually devoted to other promising novelists and illustrators. Still, in my eyes the most attractive part of the building is right above for it is there that one can visit the exhibit of the technological marvels that allow the Word to be kept for eternity in its primal rectitude.

The lady in charge of the exhibit explained to me the process in great detail. Engineers have developed the best system in the world to date to preserve manuscripts and audio records. They have finalized the perfect time capsule that can withstand any catastrophe, from radiation to acid, water, temperatures above 3000° F. The capsule is in solid titanium. The original books are placed in the capsule that is sealed. The sealing is a continuous silver wire to compress beneath the lid in order to obtain airtight connection, and it will hold for centuries. Specific bolts hold the contraption together. The air is evacuated and argon is blown inside: it already protects major documents such as the *Declaration of Independence*. Then a gas leak detector is passed over the capsule.

If nothing is detected, the capsule is placed in a thermal container, the outer skin of which is in silicon, with a fine stainless steel mesh reinforcement. The inner core is made of ceramic that can withstand the highest temperatures. A custom rack was devised to hold several capsules and then all is wrapped in heat reflective thermal protection. It is five times stronger than steel. This can withstand a furnace of 1800° F. The contraption underwent radiant heat tests and showed no damage at all.

These racks are hidden in cavities in the mountains. The racks are placed 66 feet underground in a 400 feet long tunnel, on a reinforced bed of concrete. The structures are not fixed inside the tunnel (I suppose to swing so as to withstand earthquakes). They are behind a class three stainless steel door that weighs two tons. Then six doors, ten-inch thick, further protect the interior of the cavity whose walls are made of concrete, itself two feet thick. The whole cavity is 13,000 square feet large, and can hold 600 storage racks or 36,000 time capsules, that is 5 full sets of LRH's works.

When I mentioned the similarity with the Mormons' *Granite Mountain Records Vault* in Little Cottonwood canyon that holds the genealogical records of almost the whole world, I was told that the Church of Scientology's system was incomparable in technology. The Mormon archives are not so well protected and they constantly need repairs. Also they can be visited whereas the location of LRH's archives is kept totally secret. Yet, the entry "Church of Spiritual Technology" on Wikipedia lists the various locations of CST, and regarding the conservation of the Tech indicates the San Miguel Ranch or Trementina Base in New Mexico that according to ABC journalist Tom Jarriel is the very place where the material is kept as explained above. The exact location is in fact not important at all when one looks at the religious symbolism of the whole conservation operation.

I called the exhibit of the master capsule and rack "the innermost sanctuary of the Preservation of the Tech," and pointed out to my guide that it was conveniently located in the top floor of the large building, in a rather small room, looking round (in my recollection, since we walked in a circle to look at all the displays, but it may be square). The lady replied that it was just placed there because no other place was available, and that in no way it was a sanctuary.

Visibly here again, like with LRH's offices, we see the difference between the interpretation members of a religious group will give of their own actions or rituals, and the perception an observer will have. Considering that the major development in recent years I was regularly told about by my respondents was the dawn of the Golden Age of Knowledge that rests on the most accurate version of what LRH wrote and spoke, there is no possible ambiguity as to the status of the exhibit as a literal tabernacle nestling the (quasi) divine essence of the Word. The conclusion of the presentation of the program by David Miscavige confirmed my feeling:

And just in case you missed it—we are not speaking of “corrected” manuscripts. Not “newly verified” manuscripts. And definitely not just “repackaged.” What we are speaking of is 100 percent unadulterated SOURCE.

The author of the article concluded:

To know that they are receiving the actual material from the source of the Scientology religion, L. Ron Hubbard, is the primary goal of every Scientologist. And Mr. Miscavige made it possible (Scientology 2018i).

The sacred obligation to preserve for all eternity the Word uttered by spiritual fountainheads has led to a rich tradition of techniques, holy containers, specific manuscripts, etc. In the biblical world, the Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred object for ancient Israel: by holding the tables of the Law engraved by Yahve Himself (*Exodus* 25:10–21) the ark symbolized the mysterious presence of God among His people. Yet, because of the many conflicts its keepers underwent, its location soon became mysterious, with narratives placing it in various caches, notably now in a remote church in Ethiopia. In our time, we are aware of the intense protection of rare documents in major libraries, but for financial reasons it is rarely achieved with the amount of technology displayed in the Hollywood sanctuary.

A major interesting case to compare preservation conceptions is the Shrine of the Book that houses the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The scrolls, one of the fundamentals of the Judeo-Christian tradition, are stored in protective glass and airtight containers but they are visible in rotation. They were found so deteriorated by their almost two millennia in the desert that they validate the obsession Scientologists display towards the conservation of the scriptures that sustain their own religion, with as always the urge to surpass what has been done so far in the same field. As the official CST site explains in an obvious reference to the scrolls:

In furtherance of this purpose, CST is responsible for the long-term preservation of L. Ron Hubbard’s writings and lectures. While every religion has its archives, some quite extensive and dating back two thousand years, nothing approaches the level of technology used in the preservation of L. Ron Hubbard’s works. Church of Spiritual Technology has preserved the writings and lectures of Dianetics and Scientology on more than 135 tons of archival books, stainless steel plates and nickel-plated records. These materials are, in turn, stored in 2,300 titanium capsules housed in calamity-proof vaults to ensure the timeless preservation and survival of the Scientology scripture (Scientology 2018j).

The following chapter details some of the practical applications of the creeds thus protected in safe spaces as we move now to the open-air activities of the Church.

#### *IV. Ever Increasing Social Interaction*

The incentive for the extensive social involvement of Scientologists rests on what Janet Weiland reported to me: “when LRH set the level of the Bridge, he said you have to be invited to the higher level, and for this you have to prove that you are seeing the community.” This chapter focuses on several foundations connected to and sponsored by the Church and on its interfaith programs.

##### A. The Foundations: Statutes and Missions

Once we have spoken of the missions, the churches, the administration and media facilities, we have spoken about one part only of the vast network the institution runs, for it extends its outreach through a large number of foundations that, though legally independent or organizationally autonomous, are run by Scientologists. Many of them are affiliated to the mother church, CSI, Church of Scientology International, according to various types of registrations. All are under the supervision of CRT which owns all the copyrights and trademarks of Scientology, and licenses said trademarks (which do not have a time limit) and copyrights (which do have a time limit) to each corporation. The copyright and/or trademark statement is always printed on Scientology materials so that if a corporation is found to deviate from its license, it can be pulled out by RTC and/or CSI. This is how the orthodoxy of the corporation, of the teaching and of all the levels of the staff is maintained.

When in 1993, the IRS recognized the religious bona fides of the Church, the statute it was thus granted as a 501 (c) (3) organization was extended to all its related foundations. The statute is defined as such:

501(c)(3) tax-exemptions apply to entities that are organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes, for testing for public safety (organization) community chest, fund, cooperating association or foundation organized and operated exclusively for those purposes. There are also supporting organizations—often referred to in shorthand form as “Friends of” organizations.

26 U.S.C. § 170 provides a deduction for federal income tax purposes, for some donors who make charitable contributions to most types of 501(c)(3) organizations, among others. Regulations specify which such deductions must be verifiable to be allowed (e.g., receipts for donations of \$250 or more) (see Statute 501(c)(3)).

Most of the foundations affiliated with the Church are hence registered as not-for-profit. Some of them are supported by the Church but not exclusively so since other groups, such as other religious movements and NGOs may support them as well, as we shall see below. I have divided the foundations according to three major types of missions: those that produce, disseminate and protect LRH's teachings; the charities that promote better methods of living; and finally the charities that bring relief to areas hit by catastrophe or afflicted by major social problems. The list is far from exhaustive.

### 1. First Group: Managing and Applying LRH's Teachings

Since the first four have already been presented above, they are just listed for a recap.

- *CST, Church of Spiritual Technology* that conducts the Preservation of the Tech. It is a 501(c)(3) corporation that owns the copyrights of the estate of LRH and is fully autonomous from CSI as mentioned already.

- *Scientology Media Production*, including Dissemination and Distribution Center is a division of Church of Scientology International.

- *Bridge Publications*: it has a special status and according to the law of each state may have to be taxed on its profits. Only the religious books are tax-exempt, not the fiction ones. The organization can also get donations but within limits according to the specific purposes.

- *ASI (Authors Services Inc.)*. As an independent literary agency for Hubbard's fiction works, it is not part of the Church and therefore it is not tax-exempt.

— Hubbard College of Administration (320 N Vermont Ave, LA 90004)

It has been there since 2001 and operated elsewhere before. It pays city taxes for the building but is a 501(c)(3). It is most important within the whole system as it is the very upper level schooling institution that passes on LRH's methods of management. Modesto Rodriguez, the director, showed me around the building



and the classes, and explained the core principles of the college (February 23, 2018).

The staff comprises some 15-20 teachers and administrators. I was first surprised to hear that this large college only had 50 students, some of them in external schools for training, yet, like in the courses rooms in the churches, I observed there the interaction between the students and instructors and understood why there could not be more, since it is always with small groups or even on a one-to-one basis, in strict application of LRH's scholastics.

Students come either for a two-year degree, or as consultants or company employees who need some specific training. The full two-year program offers 1800 hours of teaching. 50% is devoted to theory, 50% to practical training.

The college is going to open a full 4-year program and has applied to be accredited nationally. Students learn to build a business immediately after the courses. They do not need to have been in the business before starting at the college, though several come from business families. The college uses the techniques of the Church in a secular form. The focus is on organization (the whole hierarchy to implement in any business is exhibited in the hall) and on sales. It seems that some company organization principles that are now taught in most business schools were first put forward by LRH decades earlier.

## 2. Second Group: Foundations That Promote Better Methods of Living

I met with the presidents of several of those foundations. All are volunteers (some may be staff) who dedicate a large amount of their lives to the cause they promote. The support from the Church will come in the printing/fabrication of the material they use (leaflets, books, videos), but the rest has to be covered by fund-raising operations. The foundations are essential tools for the outreach programs of the institution. They implement in the field the educational and spiritual theories of LRH.

— Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) (6616 Sunset Blvd)

It is non-profit and separate from CSI. This is a different type of place for it is not just an information center that distributes reports, leaflets, videos, like the

other foundations, but it houses a genuine museum of psychiatric treatments, which turns out to be a museum of horrors.

Past the reception desk, one sees a large grim metal gate with the title “Psychiatry: An Industry of Death” above the warning Dante (1265–1321) said was inscribed over the gate of hell:

Through me the way into the suffering city, through me the way to eternal pain, through me the way that runs among the lost. Before me nothing but eternal things were made, and I endure eternally. Abandon every hope, ye who enter here.

On the left a warning spells out:

Graphic material, no one under 18 admitted without an adult. Psychiatry’s damaging and lethal “treatments” are infamous. Psychiatrists claim their methods have changed. This shocking museum will give you the facts. You decide.

And at the bottom in smaller print within brackets, “The graphic nature of the documentary material—photographs, videos, information and personal testimonies—contained in this museum may cause emotional or physical upset.” I can personally testify to the power of the material there, for even though I had already seen some of the displays in medical museums, the chronological order here and the exhaustiveness of the demonstration are profoundly disturbing, whatever opinion one may entertain about psychiatry.

The museum exhibits the various barbaric devices the medical profession invented over the centuries to deal with people considered as mad and hence as a danger for society. The displays move through the ages and show cages, contraptions, padded cells and the treatments given to the patients that caused them more harm than their actual insanity. The tortures inflicted on women’s bodies in order to suppress their sexual urges are some of the most horrendous exhibits. The visitor also learns about the electroshock therapy techniques and their impressively great frequency to this day throughout the world, including in the West.

CCHR was founded in 1969 by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1920–2012, who was not a Scientologist himself) with the Church to protest against the committing of patients without any respect for their rights. The foundation describes itself as

a nonprofit mental health watchdog, responsible for helping to enact more than 150 laws protecting individuals from abusive or coercive practices. CCHR has long fought to restore basic inalienable human rights to the field of mental health, including, but not limited to, full

informed consent regarding the medical legitimacy of psychiatric diagnosis, the risks of psychiatric treatments, the right to all available medical alternatives and the right to refuse any treatment considered harmful (Scientology 2018k).

The logo represents a hand holding the scales of justice, but the wrist is manacled.

The fight against psychiatry, as well as the fight against the over medicalization of our society in general, are almost as old as Scientology itself (which does not imply that Scientologists refuse medical treatment at all). In his article on Thomas Szasz, Donald Westbrook (2017a) explores the mission of this psychiatrist and his relations to the Church as well as the evolution of Hubbard's view on the field.

— Youth for Human Rights International, YHRI

Mary Shuttleworth, who was about to start her yearly world tour to help people understand their rights as human beings, explained to me on February 2, 2018, in her office in Hollywood how and why she launched this mission. She is the president of YHRI, the NGO that she founded in 2001 after a career as an educator. It is a mostly virtual organization based in Los Angeles. It is not-for-profit and operates with a low budget. It is sponsored by the Church.

It organizes activities throughout the world to teach people (young people mostly but not just them) about their rights as human beings as they have been defined by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) signed in Paris on December 10, 1948, by forty-three states, even by the most dictatorial ones. Mary Shuttleworth and her friends registered their new organization under the title 'Youth for Human Rights International' and it took off rapidly. Mary explained to me that:

In 2009 other organizations wanted to join but not necessarily with the "youth" dimension and so to promote what we were doing we felt we needed to expand our name to "United for Human Rights." This is what we are now. We aim at explaining to all people whether they be women/men, free or enslaved, young or old... that they must have their own human rights respected.

Over the years the organization has grown through word of mouth and the Internet.

In 2004, her son, who graduated from film school was a major help in filming short promotional videos that would appeal to today's youth. In the beginning, Mary said,

we had a dream but no videos, only printed material was available, which is much less efficient than videos. As of 2003, we started the idea of filming videos by teenagers, with teenagers, for teenagers. This was far more catching.

Mary and her aides launched a world tour to expand YHRI. Since 2004, she has organized one every year. She was leaving for the two-month 2018 tour just a few days after I met with her.

Her personal crusade is to educate people as to their rights:

Surveys have found that most people have only a limited understanding of human rights. The Declaration contains the thirty rights that together form the basis of a civilization wherein all people can enjoy the freedoms to which they are entitled, and nations can coexist in peace.

Mary and her team, in the USA and abroad, organize meetings with a variety of people who feel responsible for the promotion of human rights. If the youth and educators of each given country are the primary targets of the tour, other groups are most resourceful, those of political leaders, the ministries or departments of education, of justice, of youth, of sports, and of local authorities since they are the ones with the power to authorize large meetings. They collaborate with various other non-profit organizations.

Diplomats are also solicited: in Los Angeles only there are 101 consuls (66 career and 35 honorary). The organization contacts them there to ask them to forward the information to their respective countries and facilitate the meetings between Mary and local authorities.

The people Mary will meet are interested in obtaining material that can help them promote human rights. First a courtesy visit is paid, material on YHRI is shared and feedback is expected to discuss the specific problems encountered locally. Thousands of booklets spelling out human rights are distributed for free throughout the world.

If YHRI, like all other organizations linked to CS, has to fund itself, all the material is provided for free by the Church that covers the costs of translating the documents into dozens of languages, of printing, of making the CDs... The other major resource is the large network that Mary has woven over the years. Individual

members of the Church or mere friends will also contribute to cover the huge fees the tour generates.

The organization does not give legal advice but refers people to other groups that do so. The goal is to get the material detailing human rights out to the vast world where they are ignored. The various local missions of the Church help in distributing the material. What matters most for Mary is that all the information on human rights reach those people who are profoundly afflicted by the lack of respect of their rights. Such situations are not exclusively found in poor social classes or in the context of official persecution. The tour visits the West as well as Africa, Asia, South America.

Mary Shuttleworth narrated a story that she heard in Australia. A little girl of 5, starting kindergarten, stuttered and did not want to keep going to school. Her mother found YHRI material and showed her the video about not discriminating. The child realized at that point that she herself was being discriminated in school. Her mother went to meet the teacher and gave her the video. The teacher showed it to the other pupils. They understood how their behavior had hurt the little girl and accepted her from then on.

When asked how she encountered Scientology and embarked on her specific mission, Mary Shuttleworth tells about her childhood and youth in South Africa. She was born in a very learned family. Yet, she herself found it difficult to study and had to work hard at school. Her father introduced her to the methods LRH devised to help people study efficiently, Applied Scholastics, that she calls (as several other members I interviewed) a “gift to mankind.” She joined the Church when she was 15. She then became an educator and gradually devoted her life to human rights and spiritual education.

So far she has contacts in some 90 countries. Knowing how many non-Western countries attack us for wanting to impose universal human rights that they themselves see as a Western invention, I asked Mary if she did not think her mission was double-edged, if she was not accused of moral imperialism, and whether she did not encounter strong opposition in some quarters. Mary confirmed that her mission was double-edged but she repeated that most countries had signed the UN Declaration of Rights and had to abide by it. Yet, she cannot set foot in countries where human rights are not respected.

She explained that if a country seemed little inclined to let her tour in, she checked if that country had signed the UN Declaration and if so then she would tell the authorities that by signing it their own country agreed to such promotion; she gave the example of China that showed some reluctance in the first place but had to back down since China was an early signer of the Declaration, one of the nine drafters being the Chinese representative to the Paris Conference, Dr. Peng-chun Chang (1892–1957).

Very interestingly, when I checked the biography of Chang, I found how it buttressed the strategy of YHRI. It reads that during the 1948 conference he most forcefully pointed out that the 18<sup>th</sup> century European philosophers who promoted the concept of universal human rights had themselves been influenced by the vision of Confucius (551–479 BCE) and of Mencius (372?–289? BCE), the Chinese philosophers who before our common era had already defined those rights and whose works had already then been available in translation:

At the first meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council [Chang] quoted Mencius stating that ECOSOC's highest aim should be to "subdue people with goodness." He also argued that many influential Western thinkers on rights were guided by Chinese ideas. "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when progressive ideas with respect to human rights had been first put forward in Europe, translations of Chinese philosophers had been known to, and had inspired, such thinkers as Voltaire [1694–1778], [François] Quesnay [1694–1774] and [Denis] Diderot [1713–1784] in their humanistic revolt against feudalism," he told the UN General Assembly in 1948 (Twiss 2008. See also Twiss 2011 and Roth 2018).

Such origins and influences consequently negate the exclusively Western character of those rights and should make it easier for promoters of human rights to plead for their recognition outside the West. Still, when it is not possible at all, Internet at that point is most efficient since the whole program is available on line (provided Internet is accessible in problematic countries). In other cases, community outreach and educational groups form and gradually promote the material.

A further point underlines the relations between YHRI and the Church of Scientology: the activities of YHRI testify to the profound commitment of its actors to not just promote the respect of human rights per se, but the respect of all human beings as spiritual beings that need freedom to explore and develop all their potentials:

If you want to help a person expand, you can't do it in an environment where people are under stress and suffering. You educate people, but also you try to reach the higher spiritual

level. In a way I do it for me: I can't be happy if I see other people suffering. You cannot go spiritually free when you see what's around us.

Could we see the impact of Christianity in this demand? For Mary Shuttleworth, it had simply been her own sense of wrong that triggered her future career. When she was young and driving to school in the morning with her parents, she would see all the little black children walking to school, but she could never see their school:

Was it because they did not have any?, I asked. Well, they did have one, she countered, but it was very far away and they did not have enough money to have a car. I think that it is then and there that my mission was born: I felt miserable for them and wanted to help.

— ABLE, Association for Better Living and Education International

It is located in what was previously Hollywood Congregational Church on Hollywood Bd. It started in the 1980s as an entity separate from the Church. It was recognized in 1993 as a bona fides non-profit organization. It has 40 staff, all volunteers. It runs the programs that are not strictly spiritual. Its goal is to help promote a world free of drugs, crime, illiteracy and immorality. It licenses and coordinates other foundations, notably Applied Scholastics (based in the Saint Louis Mission), Narconon, Criminon, the Foundation for a Drug Free World and The Way to Happiness, TWTH.

Foundation for a Drug Free World

Jessica Hochman, of the Sea Org, is the executive director of the foundation worldwide. The foundation organizes campaigns to inform people on the danger of drugs and as all the others, massively distributes booklets on the topic. I spoke at length on February 23 with the president of the LA chapter, Koko Tabibzadeh. She arrived in the USA from Iran as a teenager in 1978 and attended schools and colleges in different States. She and her husband, also Persian, encountered Scientology in San Francisco, through his brother. If her husband was enthusiastic immediately after his first courses, it took her much longer, but one day she decided to see for herself what to her “sounded too good to be true,” and as she told me “the rest is history.” She was audited and then her brother-in-law and herself became auditors up to level 4. She came to Hollywood to train and has stayed on even though in the beginning she did not like LA. One of the things she

appreciates is the strong Scientology presence in the city, something several of the people I spoke too also said. She worked as staff for three years but now mainly volunteers for the campaign.

At the NBA final, she and her team distributed between 30 to 40,000 booklets. Like in the TWTH project (see below) “there is no religion, though it is sponsored by the Church.” On top of her many activities as a mother she is totally devoted to teach people to “get the facts” because “what you don’t know may kill you,” which is the catch phrase of the foundation. She goes to schools, does parents’ workshops, lectures, seminars... She translated the booklet and others such as TWTH into Farsi and she tries to access Iran through email. One of her two sons is already in the Sea Org at age 20.

Interestingly, if Scientologists as a group act as typical Californians, their ethic is often at odds with the local culture. Since their focus is on better living, away from drugs in this particular case, they were very upset when marijuana was legalized in the State in 2016, with the first shops to open in January 2018. With like-minded people, Koko Tabibzadeh started a campaign in her own city, Glendale, to prevent the city council from allowing the shops. She and another lady, Cathy Morfopolous, went to city meetings, met with the mayor etc. The night of the vote, the two women with supporters packed the council room (with at least sixty people), and the proponent of the opening of the shops also tried to pack the room. A ban was voted for a full year. Now she and other activists are working to have the ban extended. Other cities joined the fight against the state law, Compton for one.

On photos one sees how the Drug Free World booklets are distributed in drug-ridden districts and to police forces in the USA, Mexico, the Caribbean, in Dubai Police Headquarters, in Europe, South Africa, Taiwan... Drug Free World is linked in purpose to Narconon, a program that goes far beyond the prevention promoted by the foundation since it specializes in the active rehabilitation of drug addicts who are treated in several centers in various countries.

TWTH, The Way to Happiness Foundation International (Located in downtown Glendale at 201 East Broadway)

I met the previous president Caralyn Bell Percy (already quoted above) at CC on February 21. She was born in Brooklyn in an African American family. She was



raised a Catholic. As a student, she encountered the Black Nationalist movement and discovered the history of slavery that she had not heard of earlier, and that made her angry.

My personality changed, I wanted to get rid of everything white. My mother was very understanding. I read Malcolm X [1925–1965] and, like my mother, studied education. I started teaching in a Black school in Brooklyn but had problems and I saw across the hall a colleague, Bernard Percy, who was doing fine, but I would not talk to him because he was white. We started talking at the end of the year. He said “I have something that might help you, Scientology.” I knew the name but had not been interested. I had so much admiration for him, for the way he treated the kids as if they were normal people. I took the three books he gave me, read them, and this is how I accepted to go to the Church when I came back in August. He had talked about me so that everybody knew me. The courses changed me so that now I felt confident with my students.

We got married and had children. His family would never meet me as they were Jewish, except his mother after his father died, except also an aunt who loved you if you could eat her food! After several years of college we came West. Bernard wrote a book on children: *Help Your Child in School* [Prentice Hall, 1980]. I did a singer’s workshop and we had very famous artists in the class, like Filmore of Motown music. We went back East where I did more and more singing. Now that my kids were grown, I decided to do more for Scientology and I worked at the Boston church. I was sent back West to train as a public executive secretary.

Since then, she has been very active in several foundations, TWTH especially. These days she mostly has an external function to introduce TWTH to outsiders as a secular tool to lower crime. She then described her work with Ministers Freddie Johnson and Tony Muhammad to organize the Peace Rides, which we will discuss at the very end of this part.

I visited the TWTH facilities on February 21 with Joni Ginsberg, Executive Director. On the street level, past the reception desk, a large room displays the posters of various distribution operations and dozens of framed commendation letters. The foundation counts some 3,000 volunteers all over the world. The basement stores is for shipping tons of the now famous TWTH booklet (78 pages in the English version) that spells a code of good conduct to make the world a better place. It came out in 1981.

This code, translated like all the other materials of the Church into many languages (112), has been distributed for free by the millions (over 110) to individuals and to groups. Among several of The Guinness World Records certificates delivered to LRH, one reads:

The most languages into which the same book has been translated is *The Way to Happiness* by L. Ron Hubbard (USA), which can be read in 70 languages as of 2010, including Hindi, Samoa and Uzbek.

The foundation includes chapters all over the world that distribute the booklet and teach its precepts directly. The always carefully planned campaigns to launch the TWTH booklets attract people in areas and social classes that no longer find the traditional religious moral messages appealing. I suppose that the recipe for success comes greatly from the youth and dynamism of the distributors who, with convincing enthusiasm proclaim “you too can do it.” One enticing trick is to print personal photos or paintings on the cover of the booklet to customize it and instill pride in the reader. Such covers will also reassure potential users since they may recognize someone familiar instead of a standardized sugary inspirational cameo.

TWTH, or “A common sense guide to better living,” is a real outreach masterstroke. It promotes in an easy to hold format the 21 precepts anyone should follow for a happy life. The text is easily graspable for each chapter is written in a clear manner, with difficult words defined in the footnotes and illustrations alleviating the printed text. Though it is described at the bottom of the back cover in such terms: “This may be the first nonreligious moral code based wholly on common sense. It was written by L. Ron Hubbard as an individual work and is not part of any religious doctrine,” it does elaborate on the first religious code of our culture, the Ten Commandments, to which it adds self-improvement and self-protection, the reverence for the democratic system of government, the Protestant work ethic and temperance, ecological concerns and religious tolerance. It underlines core beliefs of Scientology: the need to care first for oneself before caring for others, the need to survive not just physically but morally so, not just either as an individual but as the member of a large group.

The final precept “Flourish and Prosper” condenses the sacrosanct American Dream that is attainable to any individual who respects the full code of conduct. Happiness is defined as “a condition or state of well-being, contentment, pleasure; joyful, cheerful, untroubled existence; the reaction to having nice things happen to one.” Here are the precepts:

1. Take Care of Yourself
2. Be Temperate
3. Don't Be Promiscuous
4. Love and Help Children

5. Honor and Help Your Parents
6. Set A Good Example
7. Seek To Live With The Truth
8. Do Not Murder
9. Don't Do Anything Illegal
10. Support A Government Designed and Run For All The People
11. Do Not Harm A Person Of Good Will
12. Safeguard And Improve Your Environment
13. Do Not Steal
14. Be Worthy of Trust
15. Fulfill Your Obligations
16. Be Industrious
17. Be Competent
18. Respect The Religious Beliefs of Others
19. Try Not To Do Things To Others That You Would Not Like Them to Do To You
20. Try To Treat Others As You Would Want Them To Treat You
21. Flourish And Prosper.

The introduction states that,

True joy and happiness are valuable.

If one does not survive, no joy and no happiness are obtainable.

Trying to survive in a chaotic, dishonest and generally immoral society is difficult.

Any individual or group seeks to obtain from life what pleasure and freedom from pain that they can.

Your own survival can be threatened by the bad actions of others around you.

Your own happiness can be turned to tragedy and sorrow by the dishonesty and misconduct of others.

I am sure you can think of instances of this actually happening. Such wrongs reduce one's survival and impair one's happiness.

You are important to other people. You are listened to. You can influence others.

The happiness or unhappiness of others you could name is important to you.

Without too much trouble, using this book, you can help them survive and lead happier lives.

While no one can guarantee that anyone else can be happy, their chances of survival and happiness can be improved. And with theirs, yours will be.

It is in your power to point the way to a less dangerous and happier life (Hubbard 2000, 5).

Its definition as a nonreligious document allows it to be distributed by any government and employees, as spelled out on the back cover, so that it has proved to be one of the best tools for outreach programs facilitating links with secular groups as well as religious ones. This is blatantly demonstrated on the walls of the Glendale building that, as noted above and like in the other foundation offices, exhibit dozens of letters of commendation from various official authorities and individuals.

Photos show all kinds of ethnic and religious groups handling the booklet: whether in the streets and places of the USA, or South America or in the far away corners of Asia and Africa. A colorful photo shows dozens of young Buddhist novice monks in front of a Thai temple holding it. Other photos show a TWTH seminar held on board the MV Freewinds for the Colombian National Police; one such seminar at the Columbian National Naval Academy; another for the National Police of Ecuador; and a photo shows the Ecuador army carrying boxes of the booklet to distribute in a stadium.

A video shows how in February 2017, having heard about the success of the program in Columbia, where it had been found that after a massive distribution of the booklets homicides decreased dramatically, someone in the Philippines contacted the police authorities in Davao to organize a similar operation that, according to the Church, also lowered the rate of homicides tremendously. Seminars were then organized for the police, prison wardens, etc., and 1000 drug dealers and drug addicts are said to have reported to the police afterwards (Scientology 2018l).

### 3. Third Group: Humanitarian Foundations

Foundations to address specific social ailments are extremely common in the USA for a variety of reasons, the major one being that in a country with far less governmental intervention and funding than in more redistributive social systems as in several Western European countries, the private sector performs a paramount role to alleviate the consequences of poverty and inequality. Consequently, if charities do exist in other Western countries, they are by far

outnumbered in the USA where thousands of voluntary associations, often linked to religious groups, try to make up for the lack of public funding. They will raise funds or collect great varieties of goods (clothes, furniture, books, toys...) to offer to victims of accidents or of economic downturns.

Scientologists are part and parcel of this vast network. They will help people in dire straits but, as I have often heard in America in general, they consider that unless they have fallen prey to major accidents in life, individuals should first learn how to recover their dignity by themselves, which is what Scientology as a technique teaches. In a continuation of the Protestant conviction that the individual is almost solely responsible for his/her success or failure, Scientologists hold that the problems people face may result from a bad choice of life, and that if they were really willing to improve their conditions, they should make better decisions, one of them being listening to what LRH had to say.

Aware that without the charities, the social situation would be much worse, local authorities will always send letters commending them. The Church of Scientology displays hundreds of them on the walls of its institutions as we already said. To the observer, these letters attest to its complete integration in the social and political fabric of American society and most strongly perhaps in that of Southern California.

The foundations of the Church operate with other organizations, an exchange completely unthinkable in my own country where charities, whether lay ones (such as the Red Cross) or those run by religious groups, will never stoop down to even consider working hand in hand with the volunteers of the Church of Scientology (I have discussed this issue at length with the Church authorities in France). Two such charities are presented here: the Women's Auxiliary Corps and The Volunteer Minister Program.

— Women's Auxiliary Corps

Lisa Malm, already quoted at the end of chapter two, is the president of Women's Auxiliary of the Church of Scientology of Pasadena, located on 2708 Foothill PMB 151, in La Crescenta. Presiding the Women's Auxiliary is what she called her hat or responsibility within the Church. It is a specific charity dedicated to helping poor women and children in need, more specifically ex-drug addicts or women just out of prison, to look good to find a job and take care of their families.

The founding chapter was the ideal org in LA. There are chapters in many areas now (the Paris Celebrity Center is planning to open one). When I visited Lisa, she was in the process of collecting clothing in good condition to give to unemployed women to look pretty when they have to sit for a job interview. These women will also be given money to go to the hairdresser's, or to have a manicure. The goal is to make them feel proud of themselves and radiate confidence when they are looking for a job because, as it is well-known, this will boost their chances of getting hired.

Another major action is collecting toys, in particular teddy bears, to donate them to the fire brigade to give to children, or even adults, who are victims of fire or of any accident. It has been proved that holding a teddy bear will lastingly comfort the victims, and boost their energy to survive (which links up with what I mentioned above regarding the one to one courses via teddy bears). Collecting toys and various types of Christmas presents are another major activity.

This charity either helps people directly, or works with several others, notably:

- Family Promise: it is geared towards families who face a sudden problem. They are tested for disease, for drug addiction.
- Journey Out: it helps young girls in need.
- Covenant House.
- Sickle Cell Disease Foundation of California: for cancer research.
- Daughters of Zion, Restoring God's Queen.

Lisa Malm showed me a letter sent by the latter organization that testifies to the strong partnership Woman's Auxiliary entertains with other charities. The letter was written (no date given) by Linda Wiggins, CEO and founder of the Daughters of Zion (there are several organizations under such a name, this one is a 501(c)(3)) Charity. Linda Wiggins is an ordained minister of Calvary Baptist Church of Pacoima. Her organization focuses on single parents who reside in the greater San Fernando Valley to help them finish school, train for jobs, and to provide them with “emotional help to develop self-confidence enabling them to provide stable emotional health for their children.”

The number of single parent families in the USA is one of the highest (if not the highest) in the West, which poses a major threat to the fabric of American

society. The charity claims that there are approximately 13.7 million single parents in the country, with some 26% of children under 21.

The letter spells out the details of the help provided by Lisa Malm and her aides for “women who are transitioning out of shelters.” The letter is most interesting, as it is not about huge funds or large gifts; it is not about some sweeping social action. It is about the small daily needs of the deprived—one bed, a few sheets—which underscores the real poverty of individual women as well as the attention given to them by other women willing to spend a large amount of their time to help relieve their suffering.

Linda Wiggins continues:

I am most grateful for the fulfilling of the special requests. A Cal-king bed [which is longer than a regular king size bed] was donated and I asked for sheets to fit the Cal-king and the twin beds donated for the children. I do not give used sheets or towels which are just some of the items that I either buy myself or request as a donation. You responded generously. ... Thank you again for your compassionate support. We hope that you will continue to partner with us in our commitment to help unfortunate single parent women begin again. Your support repeatedly plays a key role in their success because you help Daughters of Zion give them hope.

A few days before my visit, Lisa had received another letter of appreciation, this time from the official Department of Children and Family Services of the County of Los Angeles (dated February 6, 2018). Christine Spooner, the Program Manager, thanked her and Sandie Freeman for the partnership that they have had “with the Shelter Care Section for so many years.” The author of the letter congratulates them for their action in favor of the children in their care:

The children in the Los Angeles County foster care program have been blessed by your continued generosity and support. We could not provide for their needs without community partners like the Women’s Auxiliary... The day that you delivered the wonderful gifts, a female youth age 12 saw the large stuffed teddy bear as she was leaving to return to her placement. She asked me if she could take the stuffed animal, and I replied yes. The joy on her face was priceless as she stood in front of me catching the teddy bear. It is your simple acts of kindness that mean the most to these children. We thank each of you for your roles, big and small. It is making a difference in their lives.

On a personal level, I learned that not only Lisa Malm’s husband but also their four children were in the Church. Two of them belong to the Sea Org as well as their spouses. I read the dozens of completed course certificates plastered by the children on all the doors of the house to display their pride at having completed so

many courses. She told me that she brought up her kids as Scientologists because it was good for their spirituality.

The house is beautifully designed and lived in, located on the hills of Glendale overlooking the still sparsely inhabited slopes that connect the city to Los Felix. The dedication of Lisa to Women's Auxiliary is all the more admirable as she could just spend her free time enjoying the amenities of her house. Typically, like the other Scientologists I interviewed, she feels that she must help all these people, women and children first, who have not been able to draw from their inner resources because they have never been taught how to do so and because life has treated them miserably.

— The Volunteer Minister Program

It is the best-known charity of the Church because of its ministers with their bright yellow jackets highly visible in disaster zones. The program was created in the mid 1970s by L. Ron Hubbard, who defined the Volunteer Minister as “a person who helps his fellow man on a volunteer basis by restoring purpose, truth and spiritual values to the lives of others,” a definition that implies that the principles of Scientology be applied in the relief process itself. The program is described as

a broad initiative bringing effective physical and spiritual assistance to anyone, anywhere. Since its inception, hundreds of thousands have been trained in a wide range of skills that use Scientology fundamentals to alleviate physical, mental or spiritual suffering and improve any aspect of life.... In addition to serving their own communities worldwide, Volunteer Ministers extend their help to remote cities, towns and villages (Scientology 2018m).

The Church established the Volunteer Ministers Disaster Response Team after its volunteers served in 9/11, 2001. They have been present on most catastrophes along with other relief agencies. When the earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, the team immediately chartered six planes to transport medical personnel, supplies, the volunteer ministers and also Mormon volunteers out of Miami, New York and Los Angeles. Janet Weiland explained to me how she had organized the logistics with Joeva, the travel agent of the Church. The team also flew Haitians from New York for free because they wanted to go home to help.

When they found that the airport in Port-au-Prince was safe but closed, Janet Weiland called a lady of the International Medical Corps so that she would ask the



Haitian general in charge of the airport to let the airport open for the planes. The team gave water and supplies to the makeshift hospital that the University of Miami had set up on the runway. Seeing that the volunteer ministers were competent, the doctors asked them to help with the surgery and other emergency operations.

When hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2017, as the federal relief teams were rather slow to respond, other teams took the lead. John Travolta was one of the first to fly his own plane with aides and material and he knew which good runway to use on the island. Many more Scientologists based in Florida followed suit and flew their own planes to go to help. Mormons also arrived rapidly.

The volunteer ministers are trained to take care of the donated material, clothes, food, etc., to allow relief specialists to do what they are best at. For example, after the major fires and mudslides of 2017–18 in Santa Barbara, people donated too many things that got in the way of the rescue teams; a lot had to be dumped for it was perishable: tons of doughnuts were donated... Most often people who come to help are not trained in logistics, whereas a strict command structure is required.

Beyond material relief, volunteer ministers practice what the Church has developed to physically soothe the body and the mind, which is called “assists.” The volunteers will massage with light strokes the body to help the energy flow again naturally and to relieve stress. Many testimonies from victims and also from relief workers exhausted at the end of the day testify to the efficiency of the assist.

Critics have pointed out that with their yellow jackets the Scientologist rescue teams made sure to be far more visible on photos or on television than other teams and to use their presence as a proselytizing tool. Scientologists will say the bright color is to signal to victims or other helpers where they are for extra support. Indeed, all disaster relief volunteers do wear specific colors or logos in order to be located easily by victims or by the other members of their groups or by coordinators, since each team is specialized in one form of relief.

In any case, the issue betrays the age-old ambiguity of humanitarian aid, inextricably altruistic and *pro domo*. If its roots in the West are in Christianity that dictates one should help one’s neighbor in need, out of disinterested love, it is well-known that aiding victims has also always eased conversions, were it only out of gratitude. Similarly, governments may use humanitarian aid as a political

lever, granting aid to friendly states, while unfriendly ones will be forgotten or will see previous subsidies dwindle and eventually disappear altogether, as is the case today with the American government cutting the subsidies to UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

One religious group is well-known for its clever use of humanitarian relief: the Seventh Day Adventists have specialized in organizing the complex logistics of distributing on the terrain the donations not only their own members but also other lay or religious teams have collected. Consequently the good Samaritans the victims will encounter are the Adventists who will thus collect the direct benefits of such operations in terms of name recognition and thankfulness, potentially translating into conversions. The volunteer ministers of the Church of Scientology are then just another cog in the never ending conflicts around the real motivations of humanitarian aid that, like any other social activity, will be viewed in diametrically divergent ways according to one's relation to the group.

## B. Interfaith Programs

The Church organizes what I see as three major types of interfaith activities: 1, advocacy through international religious freedom conferences and interfaith religious services; 2, disaster relief operations; 3, better living and peace campaigns in socially deprived and violent areas.

### 1. International Religious Freedom Advocacy and Interfaith Alliances

For many years, as is well-known, the Church has paired with a large number of religious leaders and believers who are more or less aggressively persecuted for their faith, and who join forces to go to court, and help find the best lawyers and counselors. To this end, it co-organizes advocacy operations and conferences either in its own premises or in other institutions. Annual Religious Freedom Day celebrations are organized in various countries under the auspices of the Church. Such activities are sponsored by various interfaith organizations within which the Church plays a major role through the specific actions of Janet Weiland.

Because of its intense activism in this field, Scientology has regularly been accused of being a “bottom-feeder in interfaith groups” to obtain government money for its social programs that are only seen as front operations, and to

infiltrate various movements close to power. For example the anti-Church news site *Scientology Money Project* in its June, 7, 2018 report on “Ralph Reed, The Faith and Freedom Coalition, and Scientology” accused the Church of sending disciples to infiltrate the Evangelicals in order to get closer to Mike Pence and President Trump (*Scientology Money Project* 2018).

As usual in exposés, the author never alludes to the other religious groups that similarly use interfaith networks to lobby politicians and Congress members of all stripes, whereas in actual fact they all do, notably the Evangelicals through lobbies like the Faith and Freedom Coalition. In the many interfaith meetings I have attended or chaired over the years, I could not identify one single group that was just present to show love and kindness to the others, for a very simple reason: even if they are friends, they are above all competitors on the religious market. All the groups have a *pro domo* agenda in banding together: it may just be for advocacy on specific issues, but as is the rule in social networks, it is often to lobby other powerful religious authorities and through them secular ones, in the hope that their group will benefit in various kinds of ways from the rapprochement. The lobbying goes both ways, for reciprocally those authorities will expect good returns in terms of votes and publicity. Scientology is again just one of the players in the field of social influence.

As I have been able to see from up close, Janet Weiland has developed strong personal relations not only with other clergies but also with high-ranking authorities. Of course, it has been her job in the Sea Org, but I do feel that it is her own personality that has helped build all these bridges in a way that perhaps other members of the staff might not have achieved so successfully. I could read this in the meetings I attended with either secular or religious officials where she stood as a most valuable member of the club, and not as a mere spokesperson for her Church.

In February 2018, I participated as a speaker in a conference on “Religious Liberty as a Global Problem” hosted by AME (African Methodist Episcopal) minister Rev. Cecil “Chip” Murray at the University of Southern California Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement (“Chip” Murray is already mentioned above for his participation in the opening of the Inglewood community center). Most of the presenters were familiar interfaith partners of the Church of Scientology that I list here to show the inclusiveness of such a network, whose members operate concretely in their respective communities to improve

conditions of spiritual and material life, often indeed through political lobbying to obtain financing. They included Mahomed Akbar Khan, of King Fahad Mosque, Culver City, founding director of a sister organization, The Society to Offer Peace and Prosperity (STOPP), whose mottoes are: Stopp Hate, start loving; Stopp hunger, start sharing; Stopp violence, start forgiving; Jorge Lee Galindo, director of another sister organization from Mexico, Impulso 18, Libertad de pensamiento y religion; Patrick Q. Mason, dean of the School of Arts and Humanities of Claremont Graduate University and professor of Mormon studies; Alan J. Reinach, Executive Director of the Church State Council of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the Western USA; Canh Quang Tran, president of the Cao Dai overseas missionary, from the Vietnamese districts of Westminster in Orange County; Nirinjan Singh Khalsa, Commissioner on the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, and Executive Director of the California Sikh Council; Bigvai Estrada, then pastor in Coachella, California, of the major Mexican group The Light of the World, along with a pastor from the church in Xochimilco, Mexico, Rev. Abner Nicolas Menchaca; Randolph Dobbs, director of external affairs for the LA Baha’i Center; and several others.

A collection of photos in the archives of the Church testifies to the great number of religious partners it works with. In its international centers, one sees representatives of many groups: Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests, bishops, patriarchs, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Druzes, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha’is, Caodaists from Vietnam, members of Korean new religions... Regularly, members of those same religions will gather for worship, again either in the venues of the Church or in their own premises. Even though I have always been aware that such encounters are common in the USA, they always strike me as original because in my own country when religious representatives do meet it will be almost exclusively “the big six”: Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists, not because the other religions are not present in France, but because interfaith meetings are all but really inclusive, and thus it is hard to imagine the Church of Scientology invited by other religious leaders in France, even though things are slowly evolving as Éric Roux explained to me (see just below). In Los Angeles, it definitely is.

I was invited myself to attend a major interfaith and inter-institution ceremony, the February 11 Sunday service to mark the opening of Black History Month at the landmark FAME, First (oldest) African Methodist Episcopal Church in LA, at

2270 South Harvard Boulevard. There, the African American congregation and pastors welcomed other religious leaders and all the officials of the city and county: the mayor of LA, Eric Garcetti and his family, the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department), Highway Patrol, LAFD (Los Angeles Fire Department) authorities and all the African American members of the upper boards of LA city and county, of the California legislature, of the US Congress and of the service and business community. The ceremony lasted all morning and over lunch. It was clear that the representative of the Church of Scientology was treated with the same respect and friendly familiarity as all the other guests not just by the FAME clergy but also by all the officials of the LA local bodies. I learned why later when I participated in the meetings for Disaster Preparedness.

In France, the long career of *Éric Roux* has also been tightly connected to interfaith campaigns to advance religious freedom, still a moot question in the country that has been reluctant to implement the promises spelled out in the first article of its 1958 Constitution. Yet, he admitted that the governmental body in charge of the relations with religious groups, the Bureau des Cultes of the Ministère de l'Intérieur (the Department monitoring homeland security, intelligence and the political management of the country), seems not to consider the Church as a major problem. Though there is no official relationship with the Church as there can be with major religions, which are officially received by the Bureau, he has had many informal contacts with the staff over the years. He is intent on moving towards more recognition, but right now the Bureau is focused on the relations with Islam.

If he has not yet been able to establish official relationship with the major religions in France, which are leery of such rapprochement, he has enjoyed good relationships with several of their high ranking members, as for example with Bishop Michel Dubost (of Evry), who was President of the Council for inter-religious relationship of the French Catholic Church (and is now retired).

As regards Europe, Roux started representing the Church at the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) in 2009.

This was the beginning for me of the creation of a network of friends who had the same willingness to fight for the Freedom of Religion. I participated in the creation of the European Interreligious Forum for Freedom of Religion in 2013. This NGO, which since then has been recognized by the French administration as an NGO of general interest of philanthropic character, became very active at the European level.

People of many faiths sit on the board of the Forum: Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Sikhs, and several Jewish leaders representing it in Israel too. Éric Roux was elected President in 2014 and was reelected each year since. Since then, he has been invited to many venues throughout the world to speak about freedom of religion. He showed me pictures of himself in different locations: for example, one sees him in Switzerland with the honorary Dean of the Cathedral of Geneva and the President of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy of Prisons as well as with Yves Nidegger, National Councilor (the equivalent of a government Minister in Switzerland). On another photo, he stands in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2013. On another one, he is in Brussels, with Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Muslims, Sikhs, discussing the topic of Religious Freedom in Russia with a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church Foundation St Gregory the Theologian, and also with Jan Figel, who is the European Union Special Envoy for Religious Freedom outside of the European Union (EU). One photo shows him in Italy in an event organized under the patronage of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Dr. Thorbjørn Jagland) and of the Tuscany Regional Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and the University of Florence.

He coordinated the International Religious Freedom Roundtable in Brussels, an informal group of individuals from non-governmental organizations and of various faiths who meet to discuss international religious freedom issues on a non-attribution basis (meaning that their remarks remain anonymous). In that position, he has coordinated many initiatives on freedom of religion with dozens of NGOs, faith-based or not, from all around the world, such as “joint letters,” or letters signed by several NGOs to advocate specific projects sent to governments and international institutions.

He is also active in the Council of Europe, where he collaborates with MPs when legislation on religions or religious freedom is involved (see EIFRF 2017). He also organizes interfaith meetings which gather inter alia majority religions with the Church of Scientology of Brussels.

In June 2018, he organized in Brussels the launch of the Faith and Freedom Summit, in official partnership with the third biggest EU political coalition, the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE). This non-partisan event was conducted in official partnership with the European Office of the Church of Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights. Éric Roux was the

Master of Ceremony and one of the keynote speakers. The event was introduced by the Executive Director of ACRE, and displayed an impressive list of speakers, including Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; Jan Figel, mentioned above; and Sam Brownback, U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

As Roux stated to me,

All of this shows that one finds an increasing acceptance of Scientology at the European level. More than that, in the fields where we have proven our expertise (such as human rights, drug education, or freedom of religion), it is not rare to see officials come to us when they need rapid results. That has been the case for example for the Faith and Freedom Summit, when ACRE contacted me to be the organizer of the event. I asked them why they would come to the Church of Scientology for this particular issue since they had contacts with more “mainstream religions.” They answered, “because with you, we know we will have results.”

Eric Roux has also worked with scholars for many years and has been asked to contribute chapters in scholarly books, either on Scientology or on freedom of religion. This led him to add:

Needless to say that at one point, I realized that I had to take responsibility not only for Scientology but for the freedom of religion for all. I really think that this is not just a PR activity. It’s a crucial activity for the survival of humanity. It’s based on my personal belief, and also on the Code of a Scientologist: “As a Scientologist, I pledge myself.... To support true humanitarian endeavors in the fields of human rights... To actively decry the suppression of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy or data which would help Mankind... To support the freedom of religion.”

That is why you will always find me defending the rights of others, like right now in the European Parliament defending The Church of Almighty God, a Chinese Christian religious group persecuted in China. I have worked to help the members of this Church obtain their refugee status in France, and I have spoken in their favor at the UN, and I just translated a forthcoming book on the Church of Almighty God in French, from religious scholar Massimo Introvigne. I also worked openly to defend the rights of religious minorities in Europe, as for the Sikhs when they are refused in public schools in France because they wear a turban. I have also publicly taken position against anti-Islamic bigotry, for example.

## 2. Interfaith Networks and Disaster Preparedness

In LA, when Disaster preparedness is mentioned, everybody starts the sentence with “*when* the Big One or tsunami hits,” never “*if* they strike,” so that

to the non-Californian, the population seems to be on constant alert. Yet, this is far from being the case, so that all the specialists I encountered complained that this constituted a major challenge. This is when religious authorities move in.

Janet Weiland founded the Los Angeles Interfaith Clergy Coalition in 2014 precisely in order to better organize Disaster Response. The members can be invited to sit on the Sheriff Clergy Council to address specific issues. Bishop Mendez, a Baptist minister, is the chairman of the Clergy Coalition, with Mahomed Akbar Khan and Janet Weiland as co-chairs. Not all the religious groups who will participate in interfaith meetings formally belong to the Coalition (for example, as of February 2018, the Baha'i representative was not a member, neither were the Buddhists or the Hindus). The goal of the Coalition is to plan how to reach out to the other religious groups, because it has been shown that in the USA when a major problem occurs, people naturally turn to houses of worship for safety and support. There are over 400 different religions or denominations that maintain houses of worship in LA, yet they are not prepared at all to organize relief for their own congregations and even less for their neighboring communities.

From my observation, I can say that Janet Weiland does not just sit on different panels to exhibit the sympathy of her institution, as critics claim. I saw her acting as “a force de proposition,” as we say in French. Not only did she found the Interfaith Clergy Coalition, but she serves on the board of ENLA, or Emergency Network of LA, and is the chair of its Interfaith Committee. ENLA is part of VOAD, Voluntary Organization Active in Disasters, which is national and coordinates with FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency. In her explanations, she insisted on the fact that faith organizations provide more than material relief, which is what secular ones will be contented with, for they offer powerful spiritual care as well, which will speed the recovery of the victims. She is herself a trained Emergency Chaplain.

I participated in two interfaith meetings with city and county authorities to discuss disaster preparedness and various peace-promoting actions. One took place on February 22 in the social center of the Catholic cathedral Our Lady of the Angels with the Women in Homeland Security, the LAPD, and the Red Cross. The speakers focused on the evolution of cities in the near future, of LA in particular, and on the new technologies that soon will allow more rapid responses to disasters. The one held on February 20, the Dinner and Interfaith Meeting



with Homeland Security (DHS) and American Red Cross, offered more interaction. It was held in the social rooms of the Westwood Mormon Temple and chaired by Wade E. Beames, the Public Affairs official of the LA Mormon Church, he and his wife being very active in interfaith relations. Several sister charities were represented with the LAPD, LAFD, DHS...

A major speaker was Robert “Bob” Lindsey who was running for L.A. County sheriff in 2018 (he was not elected). In a typically American syncretism of secular, Christian and Scientologist values, his platform (printed on his name card) reads like this:

I pray God will give us knowledge, wisdom and understanding. I pray God aligns us with the right people, in the right places, at the right times, in the right ways, so that right things can happen. We can do this together!

His suggestions for a better prevention of social disorders and for better disaster logistics were greeted as being sounder than those enforced by the current sheriff, who seemed to have kept interfaith groups at a distance.

Speakers included Osas Otasowie, director of the Faith Based and Community Programs of the Red Cross. Faith Based programs, that is to say charities directly run by religious groups with material and financial support from the State, operate all kinds of services, thus allowing the government to save money, since their employees are for the most part volunteer or salaried by the religious group itself. A famous example is the Faith Based Initiative established in 2001 by President George W. Bush (still in force today, though under a slightly modified version) to provide people in need with federal funds directly distributed by religious organizations, supposedly because these organizations know the communities better, but in fact to save paying federal employees. In LA, the Red Cross Faith Based Affiliate Program “serves as a link for houses of worship to equip leaders, members and facilities with American Red Cross approved resources for preparedness and resiliency” (text on a leaflet handed by Osas Otasowie).

Corresponding to what the Clergy Coalition seeks to achieve, a program designed by the University of Washington, MYN, Map Your Neighborhood, was presented. The training takes about 15-20 hours. The goal is to teach people how to orient themselves in their districts, to identify the houses of the elderly, the disabled, children, to place “the locations of natural gas and propane tanks for quick response” (MYN leaflet), to learn to put up “ok signs” or “help signs” in

the windows, to constantly have 96 hour supplies since, unlike hurricanes, earthquakes are not announced in advance.

The Red Cross representative said the South-West chapter had affiliated 180 religious organizations from Malibu to Hermosa Beach, and hoped to be able to train the leaders of these groups to map neighborhoods. Janet Weiland expressed her regret that the area thus covered was only a small part of the county (the North West coastline), one of the most affluent districts, thus one already relatively well-prepared, and that radical programs had to start to instruct the whole county.

The disasters the participants debated were far from being exclusively natural ones. Someone asked for better Active Shooter Preparedness (which worried me profoundly since I understood the terms literally as meaning that the people around me were asking the LAPD to teach them how to shoot more efficiently), to which the representative of Homeland Security replied that such programs were already implemented (“DHS aims to enhance preparedness through a ‘whole community’ approach by providing products, tools, and resources to help you prepare for and respond to an active shooter incident”: DHS 2018). All the different stages and situations are covered in the preparedness (first responder, human resources or security professional, private citizen...) so that, to a European observer, the countless shooting attacks in the country appear to have turned into well-oiled operations, clinically circumscribed and part of daily routine. I voiced my opinion to the LAPD officer next to me that the best and only preparedness in my eyes was strict gun control; he agreed and lamented that he and all the police officers shared the same vision, continuously countered by politicians and voters.

He then told participants: “I would like you Interfaith leaders to participate in LAPD programs for if we want to prevent another Rodney King [1965–2012] event, we need dialogue but mostly actions.” There are probably not enough of them yet, but several churches have already taken action in the neighborhoods where potential riots are simmering.

#### 4. Campaigns in Socially Deprived Areas

— Work in LA with African American Leaders

As written in the introduction, it was my discovering the links between the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the Church of Scientology that triggered my investigation into its expansion. According to testimonies, it seems that the partnership the Church has built with groups (religious or not) outside of its traditional Western audience is based at first on its massive campaigns promoting A Drug Free World and The Way to Happiness and its study technology. Obviously some people interested in those campaigns may proceed towards the auditing process, and they may feel comfortable in not having to switch religious allegiance. I will address the links between the Church and African Americans, whether Christian or members of the Nation of Islam, and with the Druzes. I will conclude on the South Central Peace parade.

One can hear and see on many videos people of all faiths, Christians, Muslims... mere members or clergy, praising the Scientologist precepts for what they have brought to their lives: for example Reverend Leon Kelly, Director of the Open Door Youth Gang Alternative Program in Colorado, a preacher “from the hood,” as he calls himself. In a video, he explains how for the after-school programs with the most aggressive kids, he decided to use TWTH because he had seen how it had helped people around the world. He thinks that it is most satisfying to actually hand out something to people, give them the booklet. He uses it with elementary kids up to gangsters that the camera shows perusing the first precepts with anticipation for the next ones ending in “Flourish and prosper.” And it is a “no brainer for me to put in place the program” (I quote from a Church of Scientology video; his story can also be read at Scientology 2018n).

Another famous go-between is Rev. Alfreddie Johnson of the True Faith Christian Church and founder of the World Literacy Crusade, who introduced the Tech to NOI leaders. He is presented as the reverend who helped “Min. Farrakhan to deliver the technology of Scientology to the Nation,” and he is quoted as declaring:

The beautiful thing is when we get this technology, Black folks are going to get it, period. It will really relieve us of some of the insanity that plagues our minds and I’m convinced it will help Black people and Whites the world over who need to be healed ... The Nation’s believers are rare and they are pivotal in my opinion to salvaging our people and this planet (Muhammad 2011).

In Inglewood center I met a young man, Reamus, who was as interested in my being French as I was in his being NOI. We had a long friendly chat. He told me how he had lived in different places, had joined the Nation, had married but then divorced and remarried, and was now most interested in following Scientology courses for everything they taught him about himself and how they helped him daily.

This attraction of quite a few African Americans to Scientology can probably be tracked to a 1961 document: the “Message for Colored People” that LRH published in *Bulletin Board Magazine*. He instructed his aides to “Print this up for a handout in all heavily populated colored areas.” The declaration reads:

Completely aside from what it means to the whites, Scientology offers to the colored people of America a wonderful chance.

The world’s primary study of the mind has a long and excellent record of success across the world in improving the opportunities of Man.

If Scientology were to be used by the colored people of America, the gains for which they have striven so hard in the social world would be guaranteed.

Scientology can increase intelligence, improve personality and bring personal power and alertness to any person to whom it is applied.

It may seem at first a difficult subject but it is not. It is far easier than common school subjects.

Many colored people have already studied it to professional level. The gates of Scientology are wide open to colored people. A professional Scientologist has more social standing and ability to help than other professionals.

If colored people, even on a part time basis, studied it and used it upon other colored people, if colored centers were to be set up in America for colored people, the standard of ability, social activity and intelligence would be increased far beyond any future possible loss.

Look into Scientology and use it to help your own people. Let them truly walk in the sun and take their place amongst the most brilliant people of Earth (Hubbard 1961).

Quite a few momentous things took place for the African American community between the 1961 “Message for Colored People” and 2011, when the Nation of Islam newspaper *The Final Call* announced “Nation Adopts New Technology to Serve Black Nation, World.” Obviously, the call had been heard. Marlene Muhammad, the journalist, narrates how “The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan has introduced Black America and the world to modern equipment,

which will help in the salvation and liberation of Black people in America and others who are poor, downtrodden and oppressed.” This equipment is auditing at the Church of Scientology. She continued,

through the discovery of *Dianetics: the Modern Science of Mental Health* by L. Ron Hubbard, an author, scientist, religious leader and humanitarian, Scientologists could help his followers better understand and utilize the wisdom they have been given by their Saviour, Master [Wallace] Fard Muhammad [1877?–1934?]. A sincere study of the technology would also make Jesus more real in the lives of Christians...

We are Muslims but if Scientology will help us be better, then I want the technology of this to help us to be better Muslims. Christians can accept it and be better Christians. I don't care who gets it. Just get it and be better at who you say you are (Muhammad 2011).

In the speech by Honorable Minister Farrakhan pronounced at the Nation of Islam's headquarters Mosque Maryam in Chicago, IL., July 1, 2012, to counter those who criticized his interest for Scientology, he said:

I found something in the teaching of Dianetics which could bring up from the depths of our conscious mind things we would prefer to lie dormant but the auditing process brings it up and it is like bringing demons out of us, and this is what Jesus did, an exorcism... You can get rid of the past and make a future for yourself, how could I see something that valuable and see the hurt and sickness of my people and not offer it to them... I found a tool that I think can help us, I thank God for Mister Ron Hubbard (Farrakhan 2012).

The *Final Call* journalist reports also that previously,

On Feb. 25 during the Saviours' Day 2011 weekend, nearly 500 Muslims graduated as Certified Hubbard Dianetics Auditors, bringing the total number to 659—a number which has increased since the close of the Nation of Islam annual convention. Last August, 155 Muslims participated in the NOI's first auditors' graduation ever.

Several testimonies follow from NOI members who, in spite of the cost of auditing, managed to save and go live near Scientology centers to complete their courses. The article goes on to explain that it was Minister Tony Muhammad, Western Regional Representative of NOI, who “[t]hrough his own healing and transformation through the technology... has been a catalyst to help bring this tool to help Min. Farrakhan and the Nation better serve Black people.” He is quoted as affirming that,

The feeling is indescribable... My wins have been coming into the knowledge and understanding of my own personal demons and devils, to be able to cast them out, and to rightly see myself. I regained my faith, which was slipping (Muhammad 2011).

Minister Tony Muhammad testifies also on what he keeps gaining in Scientology on several videos (Scientology 2018o).

One afternoon, I met with him and asked if I could talk to him. He very obligingly spent time to tell me about his life, how he grew up in a neighborhood of Georgia where he had to confront racism daily and how he had encountered Scientology. He explained to me that it all started with Rev. Alfreddie, mentioned above, who had met Dr. Louis Farrakhan at a young age and had an interest in joining NOI, and was also interested in Scientology. Farrakhan then mentioned that he knew someone interested too. After the One-million Man March,

Doctor Hakim [I suppose Dr. Hakim Abdul Muhammad] lost his wife and felt miserable, but he had a friend who was a Scientologist and told him, “maybe you should come.” He did go, he did the process and he did change him. This is how I came to it.

He then went on to speak about his work among gang members and spoke of a young man who had stolen a car and was shot 70 times by the police. He organized a protest for months. The LAPD found the policeman out of compliance. The next day gang members went to do a prayer vigil. Police officers came.

Though he is part of a council that works with the police, one day he was beaten up by a policeman, and handcuffed. Thousands of people came to start a riot and as he told me,

I could not handle the love of the people. I was then out of control. At that point Rev. Alfreddie came and I told him that I wanted to quit the ministry. To which he replied “Do you realize who you are?” You need life repair. It resonated. He said, “I am picking you up,” and the next day he brought me here. It was full of Caucasians, I freaked out, they had decimated us.

Yet, as he did not want to hurt the feelings of Rev. Alfreddie Johnson, he stayed on, never to regret it: “When I saw the way those people handled me... So at the same time as I am learning the teachings, it resonates.” Three weeks later, Rev. Alfreddie met Dr. Farrakhan, who did not know Tony Muhammad was “doing life repair.” They then met in Chicago and Dr. Farrakhan exclaimed to Tony: “You look different. I want the same treatment.” He took the same courses, and then “he had wings.”

Tony Muhammad asserted that he did not want to change his religion and did not need to.

The Tech is so natural to human beings. It gets you back to your own nature. This is what I love and respect about this Tech. It reminds me of one book, *Supreme Wisdom Lessons*, by Master Fard Muhammad to Elijah Muhammad [1897–1975]. There, the author takes the dogma out of the religion, and he put science where dogma had infiltrated. For us we love science, and to know that the Tech was science of the mind, it made us better Muslims. We could get a better grasp of language, of our study (I took basic courses clearing words).

We applied Dianetics to our members and we found a congruency. So the two systems are a very good marriage. I study with all kinds of people, Christians, ministers. I call myself someone who has studied religion. Then, you don't put barriers. I can call myself a Jew, a Christian. All I want to know: are you a good person? This is what the technology has done for us. I used to blame a lot, now I take responsibility.

As Western Regional Representative of NOI, or “head of NOI West of the Mississippi,” as he jokingly rephrased his title for me, he is in charge of fourteen States, and there are seven regions of NOI in the country. He went on to explain that African Americans still suffered from the psychological chains of slavery and they had to remove them. The teachings of LRH spoke of “protest psychosis,” and how to solve problems one had to go back to the roots.

He was so on it that his teachings liberated the members from the ways they were imposed upon. Dr. Farrakhan does not fear beauty, truth, that belong to anybody. We read LRH books thoroughly. There is not a single racist statement.

Tony Muhammad went on about his own level in the Church: “I am far out on the Bridge, I am a class 4 auditor. I have done Super Power, all the basic books and tapes.”

The project with Dr. Farrakhan is now to take Dianetics to Saudi Arabia, to the scholars there, to teach them to be better Muslims. That book will help them understand the *Quran*. Dr. Farrakhan studied at CC a couple of months and all the leadership had to read *Dianetics*. “We all suffered from engrams, Tony Muhammad added, I audited a woman whose son was wounded in front of her. Also I have spread TWTH out in South Central. This is how I got the Medal of Honor.”

He concluded by stating proudly that as a group, it was the Nation that boasted the largest number of members who had reached the level of Dianetics Auditors in the world, so roughly 3,000 people. Now the nucleus group of NOI is between 75 to 150,000 members, he claims, but there are joiners, so altogether the number increases to 3 million.

The conversation with Tony Muhammad resonated with my own study (Rigal 1983) of the militancy of Elijah Muhammad who, not unlike LRH, had been a master organizer and the prophet of economic and social autonomy through the implementation of a capitalistic system of production and a moral mode of life copied from those of the Whites. He taught strict precepts on diet—for healthy living away from the junk food consumed in ghettos—, on dress code—men all dress with three piece suits and bow ties—, on the work ethic to earn one’s own money without depending on others... The “Economic Blueprint” included in his *Message to the Black Man in America* (1965) spelled five commandments after the two major rules that could come straight out of a LRH manual:

Know thyself and be yourself... The believers in truth, Islam, must stop looking up to the White race for justice and take the following steps to correct this problem.

Acknowledge and recognize that you are a member of the Creator’s nation and act accordingly. ...This requires action and deeds, not words and lip service...

[The fifth commandments orders,] observe the operations of the White man. He is successful. He makes no excuses for his failures. He works hard in a collective manner. You do the same (Muhammad 1965).

His goal was to make his disciples understand that they should stop blaming the Whites, empower themselves through knowledge, build their own empire without expecting welfare checks from the government, typically a Scientologist creed. Not so surprisingly, when he died in 1975, his eulogy was pronounced by a White man, Richard Daley (1902–1976), the mayor of Chicago, who praised him for having in forty years improved considerably the quality of life in the city. LRH would some years later have a street named after him by the City of Los Angeles with the same type of appraisal.

More recently, also within the Muslim world, in particular in the Near and Middle East, the new entrepreneurial culture that has been gaining ground has been found to be inspired to some extent by LRH. In the 1990s more than earlier, the “Islamic achiever” began to be seen as helping his religion through the success of his business. According to Tamman and Haenni (2004, 2007), it all started when young Muslims from the region went to study in the USA where they were fascinated by management theories that they sought to apply once they settled in Jordan. They wrote a great number of volumes on business administration and management that they promoted as Islamic management manifestoes. We know they were influenced by two books essentially: Stephen



Covey's (1932–2012) *The Seven Habits of Effective People* and *Dianetics*. Their own publications were to bring together Islamic activism, managerial literature and self-empowerment (Montaux 2018, 64). If I mention this trend within the Muslim world today, it is because it harks back to what Elijah Muhammad was promoting himself for his Black Muslims through precepts close to those of LRH. All this explains the many common points between NOI and Scientology that Tony Muhammad highlighted for me.

— Druzes

Similar bonds exist between the Church and another unlikely bedfellow, the Druzes of Israel. Past my first astonishment, as said in the introduction, I came to understand that they too, like the members of NOI, were interested in gaining more knowledge about themselves and about successful business management.

The Druzes are a very tight community, mostly present in Lebanon, who have always been very organized politically and economically successful. In Israel, they join the army in disproportionate numbers. I learned from Sefi Fischler, of the Tel Aviv Church of Scientology, how the Druzes have been taking courses for several years. In July 2017, friends of mine were invited by Sheikh Husein Laviv Abu Rukun, Chairman of the Druze Trustees and founder of the Association for the Preservation of the Druze Heritage, to visit his community in Isfyia in the north of the country. In his library, he possesses a large collection of the books of LRH whom he considers a true prophet and a great master of mankind.

The news bulletin (from the Church) that reported on the opening of a new center of Scientology in the north of Israel, at Carmel, in 2013, explained why the Sheikh felt kinship with Scientology:

[he] spoke about how he learned of Scientology and why he initiated the first joint activity between the Druze and the Scientology communities in Israel. In his travels around the world to learn about different religions, philosophies and faiths, he became fascinated by the Scientology movement, its members, and its founder, philosopher and humanitarian L. Ron Hubbard. He saw a striking resemblance between the Druze and Scientology communities and philosophies.

In the Sheikh's own words,

Since my first encounter with believers in the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard, I continued to meet enthusiastic and charming Scientologists who are adamant about their mission to right

wrongs wherever they exist and who organize and drive forward activities to uplift humanity in communities across the five continents... I have been tapping into this wisdom ever since, and promoting this wisdom in my world in Israel and abroad—a wisdom of purity that does not overlook any of the barriers that prevent the progress of humankind or their love for one another. L. Ron Hubbard and his followers do everything they can to demonstrate and instill the truth that all men are created free and equal—a resounding and significant truth for the Druze, who aspire to be regarded as equal to all in all respects (Scientology 2018p).

Finally, how do joint ventures between Scientology and other religious or ethnic groups translate into the social fabric of a given area? A single example, that of the Peace Rides in South Central LA, will illustrate some of their accomplishments in a festive way.

— The Peace Rides

The rides are a signature joint action by Christian congregations and NOI plus the Church of Scientology, to try and bring Latino and African American gangs, in particular the two most powerful ones, the Bloods and the Crips, to stop the killing. They have attempted to bring about a gang truce along the same terms as the one that followed the 1992 Rodney King riots and that had been reached through the coordinated action of several religious groups, but that alas had finally been broken over the years.

In our conversation, Tony Muhammad did not mention the Peace Rides but he is credited with having launched them with Rev. Alfreddie Johnson. As Tony Muhammad said in one video (there are over fifty videos featuring him on YouTube, among which several show peace rides), the Blacks do not attack the Whites; violence is intra ethnic, the Blacks kill the Blacks, and to the journalist asking why, he answered that because they know that if they kill whites, they will have the whole police forces falling over them, so that South Central is very safe for the Whites. And if Blacks kill Blacks, people will not get up in arms as they do if it's the cops who kill the Blacks.

A most effective video is “‘This is Why We Ride’ Bro. Min. Tony Muhammad” in which he says,

I have buried over 500 black boys and I have been on a corner with black babies with their heads blown off... we ride so that no mother will mourn her dead children alone, and to see the crime rate drop (Scientology 2018q).

Another video was put up by United for Peace: “Change Reality Show, United for Peace Ride and Festival in L.A. Part 1” (Scientology 2018r). An interesting video to understand the action of the pastors is: “Chip Murray, Civil Unrest and Role of Church” (Scientology 2018s).

The idea behind the Peace Rides was to organize a popular parade that would amuse the youth and also the older generations to promote unity among all of them and teach them to respect one another, so that the parade is a gigantic carnival on wheels. It opens with bikers, hundreds of them, followed by low riders (those old beautiful American cars with suspension modified so that the back almost touches the tarmac), flags, music etc. The convoy parades through the neighborhood to promote the rules of peaceful coexistence in the streets, pure Americana staged for a laudable purpose.

Caralyn Bell Percy and Stormy Stokes spoke a lot about the rides, telling me they started around Inglewood center in 2012. They are held on the last Sunday of the month. Before the rides, or during part of them, different Christian groups and pastors get together with NOI and Scientology to distribute TWTH by the thousands. Several police groups help, and related organizations, in particular GRID (Gang Reduction Initiative of Denver), which was started in Colorado and is a Chapter Gang Intervention Group, plus Ceasefire, which work with LAPD. The goal is always to bring gang members to renounce violence. The churches of all faiths offer help and support.

At a major anti-violence gang summit held at Inglewood Community Center, the TWTH logo was printed on a wall with the logos of other campaigns, such as “Ceasefire” or “United for Peace,” H.U.N.T. (Hate Us Not Today). Photos show the Los Angeles Police Chief with religious leaders (Tony Muhammad stands there also) and gang members, all placing their hands together over that of the police chief. In front of the same wall, another photo shows the Mayor of LA, Eric Garcetti, with the rapper named The Game.

The Church of Scientology claims that the rides and the reading of TWTH have helped lower the crime rate in South Central as stated in different articles (Scientology 2018t). Yet, it is very difficult to find precise statistics from city officials that could confirm the efficiency of such operations with a significant lowering of the murder rate in the Peace Rides neighborhood specifically.

A 2015 *Slate* article describes several peace operations in South Central that stem from Christian pastors and priests, the LAPD and individuals. One such movement is the Cease Fire Committee that took its name from a member of the Crisps who co-founded an anti-violence group. LAPD Deputy Chief Robert Green did say then that “South L.A. is finally enjoying a measure of economic growth thanks to the overall decline in violence,” but he did not buttress this with figures (see Obbie 2015). Another author, Rakota Berger, in his “Crime in Greater Los Angeles: Experiences and Perceptions of Local Urban Residents” (Berger 2018), is unable to say whether crime and its perception by citizens has actually decreased. His bibliography includes studies by *Los Angeles Times* journalists that do not conclude on lower criminality at all (Chang and Lau 2016; Chang 2017). A *Los Angeles Times* article, by Makeda Easter, is entitled “Crime Rates Down in California, Up in L.A. County, During a Period of Criminal Justice Reform” (Easter 2017). One also finds statistics that do show a decline in some forms of crimes, such as for October/November 2018 for the 77th Street police station, reporting on South Central profiles (LAPD 2018). Yet it is most difficult for non-specialists to read them in a meaningful way. Consequently, we must rely on the testimonies of the actors involved in the Rides, who all claim that they have truly improved the situation in the neighborhood.

### *Conclusion*

I did my longer research just one month after Stephen Kent was quoted by Geoff McMaster in the University of Alberta online journal (McMaster 2018), as affirming that: “[o]nce thriving Church of Scientology faces extinction.” Yet, according to my own observation over the last few years, and in particular in 2016 and 2018, the Church has truly been experiencing expansion, an expansion that operates horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, it has clearly expanded its surface throughout the world as seen in its real estate acquisition and renovation operations and in the increasing number of its members, even if their exact figure is hard to obtain. Its many foundations run by dedicated volunteers constantly bolster its social involvement. Vertically, the Church has buttressed its religious dimension through the highly publicized preservation of the Tech that has reinforced the sacrality of the Word of the Founder-Prophet, and through the ever more energetic dissemination of the Scriptures.

The reasons Stephen Kent gave are the many stories of

abuse within the movement and the exorbitant donations required of its members... and above all the growing influence of the Internet.... With many of its secret documents available either in whole or in part, the impetus for continued membership is greatly diminished.

Abuse in religious movements, for one, has been proved to be far more prevalent in several groups, notably within the Roman Catholic Church or other denominations, than in the Church of Scientology. As for the high cost of the courses, several other religions do demand very high tithing fees and none of my respondents found the courses too expensive considering the wellbeing and increased personal prosperity they derived from them. They thus felt that the money they had gained should be invested back into the Church through their own donations and/or their volunteering time and money for its various activities.

As for the impact of the Internet on secret lore, the same can be said of all religions that love harboring secret teachings, such as esoteric groups or Mormonism. Yet, here again, we have no real proof that such groups are facing decline because of revealed secrets, in so far as people still long to experience in their very flesh and mind and in appropriate settings those secret teachings and rituals, something the Internet cannot yet provide.

The other reason given by Kent is the “fixed revelation” that prevents the group from adapting. In my own studies (1999–2009) of the modes of adaptation of NRM in the West, Scientology and Christian Science were the only groups of the corpus that refused doctrinal adaptation. Christian Scientists replied to my conclusions (Rigal-Cellard 2000) that in no way did they wish to adapt to a decadent society, even if their refusal had a negative impact on their expansion in the West (personal correspondence). In the case of Scientology, the refusal to interpret or modify the doctrine was found to be an advantage. The extreme pride members have shown in the Preservation of the Tech, of the exact original Scriptures, places the Church in the category of the fundamentalist groups that refuse the slightest innovation and interpretation of the primeval fountainhead. In fact, on the religious stage, nowadays quite a few people converge to religions that are most faithful to the early stages. If the fundamentalist movements within Evangelicalism offer some of the most obvious examples of the exodus from more adaptive movements, one must also take into account those thousands of Roman Catholics who join pre-Vatican II movements

and more and more Orthodox parishes, in France particularly, because they hate the constant bows of Rome to modernity; the same radical movement is at work within Islam with the Salafist branches. Preserving the Tech as it was so that it may forever be is considered as a major attraction of Scientology.

The conducting thread of my study has been to track how the Church most interestingly operates in two directions that might seem contradictory at first: preservation of testimonies of the past and futuristic innovations. Such a strategy is blatant in the real estate domain and the relationship to the Scriptures of LRH, but it also operates in its relations to the outer world where it consolidates existing communities while helping them move forward thanks to the Tech and the expansion of its media operations. In the same line of interpretation, if we use Anthony Wallace's (1923–2015) classification of religious movements, we can see the Church as being revivalistic, millenarian and utopian.

It is revivalistic on the most visible level in its revitalization of urban areas, yet also and far more profoundly in its techniques to revive the *thetan*, the powerful self that is buried under oppressive engrams. It is revivalistic as well in the sense of reviving an ancient spiritual tradition when we see it as a new form of gnosis, or “technological gnosis” to use J. Gordon Melton's terminology, that is to say an initiatory system intended to redeem the Scientologist from the darkness of ignorance and to open him/her to the light of knowledge.

It is millenarian for it is convinced that the techniques that have allowed the eternal preservation of Word of LRH have opened “the Golden Age of Knowledge,” a happy millennium. Scientologists are convinced the Tech is ushering in a radical cultural transformation, what Wallace defines as

signalized by the reduction of the personal deterioration symptoms of individuals, by extensive cultural changes, and by an enthusiastic embarkation on some organized program of group action (Wallace 1956, 275).

Thus, it typically belongs to utopian groups or,

movements which profess neither revival nor importation, but conceive that the desired cultural end-state, which has never been enjoyed by ancestors or foreigners, will be realized for the first time in a future *Utopia*... [They] deny any substantial debt to the past or to the foreigner, but conceive their ideology to be something new under the sun, and its culture to belong to the future (Wallace 1956, 275-76).

Scientology has not, however, invented a never-heard-of-before system for on the contrary it has strongly capitalized on our own society's evolution. By

sacralizing the Tech, it condenses the quasi-general fascination of our society for technology and its overreaching control of our daily lives. It is perfectly in tune with the expectations of a large fringe of people who appreciate the recipes and techniques it will offer them to blaze their successful trail towards the Golden Age. Consequently, the Church of Scientology offers a perfect symbiosis between several major trends of American culture and Western culture in general: it guides its followers in their quest for constant individual self-improvement and empowerment to the point of self-divinization, yet they are tied to the imperative to trust and rely completely on technology. Even if it is not by far the only one, it is clearly a religion for our age.

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