

Generally speaking, a cult is a religious sect with unorthodox or bizarre beliefs and doctrine, often occurring on the fringe societal norms. However, the concept of a cult goes beyond a religious organization. Psychologically, cultic groups manipulate basic human needs in ways that are damaging both to the adherents and to the surrounding culture. This manipulation, however dangerous, also gives a cult its staying power, because it gains control over its followers. Manipulation like this must occur to ensure the cult's continued existence. In “Recovery From Cults”, Michael Langone provides this definition:

“A cult is a group or movement that, to a significant degree, (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing, (b) uses a thought-reform program to persuade, control, and socialize members (i.e., to integrate them into the group’s unique pattern of relationships, beliefs, values, and practices), (c) systematically induces states of psychological dependence on members, (d) exploits members to advance the leadership’s goals, and (e) causes psychological harm to members, their families, and the community.”¹

With this as our working definition, we will explore the psychological aspect of cults concretely by examining Scientology. We chose to look specifically at this group because of its unusually close fit with any major definition of a cult, and especially with the definition above. The resources we consulted are diverse, ranging from the renowned religious sociologist Rodney Stark to video interviews of former members (courtesy of Mark Bunker).² There is also a diverse

¹ Langone, 5

² <http://xenutv.com>, <http://xenutv.wordpress.com>. All video resources cited, displayed, or otherwise used are done so with Bunker's written permission. He does, however, make these resources freely available.

range of material posted on the Internet, which informs this discussion.³ However, we do not intend to “prove” that Scientology is a cult, per se, as that is our beginning assumption. Instead, we use this group to both concretize religious psychological theory and to more clearly examine the workings of psychological abuse in such systems.

A (brief) background of the Church of Scientology

Scientology was founded by the marginally successful science-fiction author Lafayette Ronald Hubbard. Many of the details of his life, as given by himself, are fuzzy and untrustworthy.⁴ The stories he did tell his followers were largely fabricated, but their colorful nature did captivate those already devoted to him. In spite of his tendency to invent history, it is undeniable that he was charismatic, bright, charming, and smart. To quote a reporter, Nieson Himmel, who had lived with him for a brief period of time, “...he could charm the shit out of anybody.”⁵

³ There is always a risk when consulting this kind of information. Many personal accounts by former members of Scientology are clearly little more than diatribe, though the authors also do not attempt to pass it off as anything but. In order offset the risk of inaccuracy, each personal account was compared with the more established articles and books, as well as examined for corroboration both internally and among other similar works. As the peer-reviewed and professional works are subjected to many checks of integrity, the information cited from personal accounts may be trusted to a high degree.

Ironically, during the composition of this essay an important chapter in the life of Scientology began. A hacker group known as *Anonymous* began targeting the church with various Internet-based attacks. Included in this series of attacks has been the smuggling of documents previously unseen by the outside world. We simply do not have the time to incorporate these new revelations into our research, though a cursory glance of some documents has helped to shape concluding opinions.

⁴ Miller, 45. Pagination is consistent with the digital file (freely distributed), not the actual printed page number.

⁵ Miller, 277.

Essentially, the church itself was founded in the wake of Hubbard's book, Dianetics, to avoid opposition from mental health professionals.⁶ As a religion, a classification that modern Scientologists adamantly defend, the group temporarily avoided scrutiny by outsiders. While Dianetics forms the core of Scientology doctrine, much has been added by Hubbard in the years after the church was founded. The basic theory is that our past experiences are recorded as “Engrams” in our computer-like mind.⁷ These manifest themselves in various ways, but they are the reason for pain and unhappiness in the human experience.⁸ Theoretically, one could “clear” and eliminate the unidentifiable elements blocking their goals/happiness.

This is done through a process called “auditing,” in which a practitioner holds two ends of an “E-Meter.”⁹ Hubbard claimed that this device gives the auditor the ability to see if the one being audited is telling the truth - even if the latter is not intentionally attempting to deceive. In reality, the device simply measures galvanic skin response, which amounts to a crude lie-detector.¹⁰ However, as the person being audited talks to the auditor, notes are rigorously recorded. These sessions tend to delve into profoundly private areas of a person’s life, often extending into a person’s sexual experiences. Should a person become restless and decide to leave Scientology, these notes, containing one’s darkest secrets, are used to gain significant leverage.

⁶ Hubbard, L. Ron. Dianetics: the modern science of mental health, a handbook of dianetic therapy. Hermitage House. New York: 1950.

⁷ Hubbard called this the “Reactive Mind.”

⁸ Miller, 356

⁹ “E-Meters” are currently constructed only by the church of Scientology in order to maintain a mysterious connotation to its followers. After scrutiny and prosecution by the FDA, it is required that all “E-Meters” contain a label that the device is not intended to be used for any health-related purposes.

¹⁰ Miller, 460

A word about L. Ron Hubbard

Hubbard himself has been psychologically analyzed both retrospectively and by contemporaries. While their findings tend to differ on certain details, they are also highly consistent. One woman, with whom he was involved for a period of time, later became a psychologist. She related:

“There was no doubt in my mind he was a manic depressive with paranoid tendencies. Many manics [sic] are delightful, productive people with tremendous energy and self-confidence. He was like that in his manic stage -- enormously creative, carried away by feelings of omnipotence and talking all the time of grandiose schemes.

*‘But when I arrived he was in a deep depression. He had been totally unable to work on his book, which had been originally scheduled for publication that month. That's why he had called me -- he was hoping I could help him get through his writers' block. He was very sad and lethargic, lying around feeling sorry for himself and drinking a great deal. Sometimes he would go to the piano and fiddle around, improvising weird melodies of his own composition. He thought that Sara [**his estranged wife at the time**] had hypnotised [sic] him in his sleep and commanded him not to write. He told me that the people in Elizabeth had tried to "slip him a Mickey" in his glass of milk and another time they attempted to insert a fatal hypo into his eye and heart to try and stop him from ever writing again. Those were the engrams he was running.”¹¹*

¹¹ Miller, 428-429, additions mine.

The paranoia throughout his life is very evident, and while reading Bare-Faced Messiah, the investigative biography by Russell Miller, one can sense his manic and subsequent depressive states very easily. Another claims that he was an extreme case of Narcissistic Personality Disorder.¹² While both appear to be true, the latter cannot be understated. There is some indication that he moved even beyond NPD into Antisocial Sadism, as is indicated by a former confidant:

“What I didn't understand about him at the time was his lack of personal attachment. He thought people were there to be used, to serve the user and didn't have any importance in their own right. I don't think he abducted Alexis [Hubbard's daughter], for example, with any intention of keeping her; he was just using her to keep control of the situation.”¹³

Hubbard had kidnapped his daughter from his ex-wife to gain leverage and effectively quiet her after she began coming public with damning information about the well-known cult leader. To simply and consciously use people, as is alleged by the above quote and corroborated by many, many other claims, indicates a person that is exceptionally dangerous. Even if these personality analyses only contain a portion of accuracy (though they are likely very accurate), Hubbard's charisma, intelligence, and extreme dark side set him up to create an organization that has ruined many families and lives.¹⁴

¹² Duignan, “I Escaped Scientology.”

¹³ Miller, 446

¹⁴ These accounts of Hubbard's psychological makeup are, of course, given by those with less than positive impressions of him. While that does indicate a bias will be found in their conclusions, it does not seem to invalidate their observations.

Positive Religious Strivings

Scientology, along with many other cults, exposes the universal need among people for witnessed significance in their lives. We need to feel loved and cared for by a person greater than ourselves. People want to feel like there is someone in this world who will listen to what they have to say and validate their existence. They want to have relationship with someone who values their opinion and genuinely cares about every aspect of their life. “This need is prototypically fulfilled by parents, and by the nurturing strata of society.”¹⁵ People who join cult groups find this fulfillment within the group itself.¹⁶ While this is not inherently negative, as many find this need by being in religious organizations, cults typically use this need to gain control of members and manipulate their lives and decisions.

Many cults bring people to their path especially by targeting younger members. In his book *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults*, Ronald Enroth discusses the seduction method that cults use in recruiting young members to their ranks. “Most (people who join) have grown up in average American homes and many have experienced varying degrees of communication problems with their parents. A number have known the pain and deprivation of a single-parent home, and perhaps for this reason some have identified with older cult leaders who provide a parental image.”¹⁷ Enroth acknowledges that many youth are looking to find their significance in a parental figure and when they don’t find this need fulfilled with the “nurturing strata of society” as Fleischman says, they will look to other people, such as charismatic cult leaders. While cult members do not always come from harmful, non-loving backgrounds, it does

¹⁵ Fleischman, 7

¹⁶ It is not as if the cults are unique in this function. In fact, there is nothing inherently wrong with finding witnessed significance within the context of a group. The problem occurs when such groups, most notably cults, seek to use and manipulate the need for witnessed significance to achieve their own goals.

¹⁷ Enroth, 149-150

make them more vulnerable to the seductive tactics used by cults to “convert” people to their way of thinking.

Fleischman briefly explores the ideas of religious ritual and magic in his discussion of witnessed significance. He believes that both religious elements receive their importance from the desire for significance. “Both enable participants to transcend the incomprehensible impersonality of the universe and to feel infinitely more important eyes turned on them.”¹⁸ In Scientology, this shows itself in various ways. Among them is the place in the universe that Scientologists see themselves, but that will be addressed later in the context of one's calling in life. The main ritualistic expression of Scientologists is the auditing process that Scientologists use as the basis of their practice. Auditing most often involves the “E-Meter” mentioned above and is done with an official auditor of the church who asks a series of questions. The E-meter is then incorporated to discover lies that may be behind the surface in the mind of people.¹⁹

Auditing sessions can be great in number and expensive. These, however, make up the core practice of Scientology, and it is claimed that one can have their inhibiting past experiences cleared from their minds. According to Stark, “Scientology’s belief system is one of ‘regressive utopia’ in which man seeks to return to a once-perfect state through a variety of meticulous, and rigorous processes intended to put him in touch with his primordial spirit.”²⁰ For the individual to realize their significance, they must be diligent students of auditing.

There is also a Scientology Enlightenment, known as the “Bridge to Total Freedom.” To fully understand the importance of reaching this Enlightenment and what it means for the

¹⁸ Fleischman, 9

¹⁹ From personal experience when taking a free “Stress Test” offered by the church, the E-Meter really only records minute impulses in the hands. When I managed to beat their stress test, the Scientologists on duty immediately probed me with deeper questions to illicit a register on the meter. They place an incredible amount of emphasis and respect on the device.

²⁰ Reitman, 2

Scientologist, one must first understand how Scientologists believe humanity came to be on earth. In a recent article in Rolling Stone magazine article, Janet Reitman reports from secret materials given to her by a former Scientologist. Reitman writes:

“They (Scientologists) assert that 75 million years ago, an evil galactic warlord named Xenu controlled seventy-six planets in this corner of the galaxy, each of which was severely overpopulated. To solve this problem, Xenu rounded up 13.5 trillion beings and flew them to Earth, where they were dumped into volcanoes around the globe and vaporized with bombs. This scattered their radioactive souls, or thetans, until they were caught in electronic traps set up around the atmosphere and “implanted” with a number of false ideas – including the concepts of God, Christ, and organized religion. Scientologists later learn that many of these entities attached themselves to human beings, where they remain to this day, creating not just the root of all our emotional and physical problems but the root of all problems of the modern world.”²¹

This story, however, is a closely guarded secret among Scientologists. One will only learn this core piece of doctrine when they have reached OT level 3.²² All Scientologists below this level are forbidden to know this, and even the mention of the name “Xenu” will result in severe punishment by organizational leaders. Hubbard himself amusingly warned that hearing the name “Xenu” before one is ready may result in catching pneumonia. Because of its outlandish nature, one can clearly see why this story is so closely guarded, but with the advent of

²¹ Reitman, 5-6

²² OT stands for “Operating Thetan.” There are 8 known levels of OT on the “Bridge,” and all of these are attained after reaching a state of “clear.”

the Internet, this has become tremendously difficult.²³ For those inside the cult who are able to make it up to the OT 3 echelon, their dependence in so many ways has already been cemented. This ensures secrecy.

Yet, in this particular case, we can see how the basic psychological need for membership is especially abused.²⁴ After Tory C. (see footnote references), a member of the church for 30 years until leaving, first received the information on Xenu, she actually found herself confused. It was only when other, higher ranked members commented on how “good she looked” and that “they could tell that the information was changing her” that she found herself believing the information she had just acquired.²⁵ Once someone's need for Witnessed Significance has been effectively manipulated, this form of suggestion becomes disturbingly easy.

Tory's experience of frustration with the “Tech” is far from unique.²⁶ However, Hubbard built within Scientology various catches to protect against doubt. If one is struggling to achieve their “win” (their word for breakthrough), it is *always* because they are holding something back, have done something wrong, or are doubting.²⁷ Even if someone were to become sick, they could be labeled P.T.S., standing for “Potential Trouble Source,” because it is thought to be their fault.²⁸ Thus, there exists the following combination: all 'wins' are celebrated and attributed to the wonder of Scientology, as well as used to bolster dependence on the group. All faults, failures, inadequacies, and negative entities are blamed on the individual (usually by the individual him/herself) because it is their fault. Redemption from these faults only comes from the group, and thus more dependency is created.

²³ Bunker: Tory C. Video,3

²⁴ A more detailed investigation into the concept of membership is given later.

²⁵ Bunker: Tory C. Videos 2 and 3.

²⁶ “Tech” is a blanket word used by Hubbard to mean any element of the church's teaching.

²⁷ It is a very similar situation to faith-healing Christian sects. If one is not healed after prayer, etc, then it is due to their lack of faith or some secret sin.

²⁸ Bunker: Vivien. Video 2

New recruits, of course, are a long way from reaching that level of dependence. Immediately from the beginning, those “testing the waters” are unknowingly subjected to “lovebombing.” In this situation, potential members take the entry-level courses and when completed, they are forced to write down their accomplishments from the coursework and read it to members of the church. These members, in response, become ecstatic and shower them with praise and congratulations.²⁹

If this does not create enough dependence in the potential member and they give indication that they are not interested in continuing their coursework, another tactic is employed. Here, the members explain that it takes a special or particularly gifted person to be able to complete this work. As would be expected, they think the person can do it, are up to the challenge, etc.³⁰ The manipulation of our innate need for witnessed significance is clear. Cult members must convince potential converts that they *belong* here, they *matter* here, and that this need is fulfilled *only* by them. As it were, Scientologists tend to be better at this and begin the process of developing dependence far earlier, much quicker, more directly, and more effectively than other cults.

The sense of calling

The ultimate goal of the Scientologist is to free themselves from the Thetans (also called Body-Thetans, or BTs) implanted from Incident 2 (The technical name for the Xenu story) and their own traumatic past experiences, and to reach the highest level of the Bridge to Total

²⁹ Bunker: Tory C. Video 2

³⁰ Bunker: Tory C. Video 2

Freedom. At the beginning, this is called becoming “clear.” Clear is an alleged state of mental development where Scientologists are able to increase their IQ, gain more potential in life, and to change the reality around them. It is in this state that Scientologists believe they have reached the Enlightenment they desire. Granted, after becoming “clear,” they must then ascend the Bridge as Operating Thetans, where they supposedly gain greater control over reality.

Originally the highest state of being, according to Hubbard/Scientology, was 'clear.' This, however, changed when the world's first 'clears' fell woefully below expectations and promises. Those critical of Scientology believe that “clear” is not a state of being at all. Rather, the idea of clear is a way to control and keep people within the group. Rodney Stark writes, “Clear is not a state of personal development at all, but a social status conferring honor within the cult’s status system and demanding certain kinds of behavior from the person labeled clear.”³¹ Stark’s discussion on clear leads us to consider another of Fleischman’s elements of religious psychology: calling.

The way to advance higher and further along this path is primarily through auditing sessions. It is vital for them to bring their thoughts into balance. It is at the level of “clear” that Scientologists “are allegedly liberated from the physical universe, to the point where they can physically control what Scientologists call MEST: Matter, Energy, Space, and Time.”³² As they advance along the path, the greater their significance is within the church and, in their eyes, the world.³³ “Scientologists see themselves as possessors of doctrines and skills that can save the world.”³⁴ They believe their doctrines are useful for helping a person live a better life here in this

³¹ Stark, 128

³² Reitman, 5

³³ It is important to note that this ascent up the hierarchy takes place *after* one is 'clear.' There are 8 levels above 'clear' that have been confirmed, though rumors abound that as many as 12 or 16 were written by Hubbard. According to most of these rumors, no one but Hubbard has ever seen them.

³⁴ Reitman, 2

world and help their own “thetan” for trillions of years to come. Reitman quotes from Hubbard on how important he viewed the processes of climbing the Bridge to Total Freedom. “The whole agonized future of this planet, every man, woman, and child on it, and your own destiny for the next endless trillions of years depend on what you do here and now with and in Scientology.”

The whole concept sounds ridiculous to an outsider.³⁵ But for someone newly being controlled by the church and therefore overly receptive to what superiors teach, this concept of being among the few that can save the world is a profound and powerful hook. For many, this strong tie between membership and calling becomes their starting point with Scientology.³⁶ A current campaign by the church parades under the mantra, “Something can be done about it,” and all Scientologists draw their inspiration from the fact that they are the only hope for our world. This appeal to natural arrogance and self-importance, along with its promise of membership and belonging, make their supposed mission all the more potent.

The recently leaked video of Tom Cruise demonstrates this principle perfectly. Scientologists are THE authority on the mind and the only ones that can 'help.'³⁷ And yet, as Cruise claims, it is a privilege to be a part of their group. It must be earned, they require hard work, etc. Superficially, the group exudes an air of arrogance and superiority, but if someone is interested in joining and has enough money or is willing to join the Sea-Org (full-time Scientologist), then they are welcome to join their quest. It takes sacrifice to be an elite within the world, but by doing so one becomes another messiah in a powerful and important group of like-minded people where they belong and can become everything they were meant to be. The appeal to all our basic needs (and egos) ought to be chilling.

³⁵ Hubbard called outsiders 'wogs.' The use of the term is very similar to the concept of Gentile.

³⁶ This is true of most, if not all, cults.

³⁷ <http://gawker.com/5002269/the-cruise-indoctrination-video-scientology-tried-to-suppress>. The most valuable aspect of this video for our purposes lies in the fact that it was never meant to be seen by non-Scientologists.

With an incredibly grandiose calling, the church manipulates this basic human need to further control its followers. Tory C, searching for something to do with her life, stumbled onto Scientology and decided she was going to clear the world.³⁸ Hubbard also knew that his message would be more validated if well known celebrities bought into his church, and thus began to specifically target them.³⁹ Currently, it is difficult to turn on the television and rotate through only a handful of channels and *not* encounter at least a few Scientologists.⁴⁰ Combine our culture's obsession with celebrity and a manipulation of a human's need to have a sense of calling, and the result can be quite damaging.

Membership

Fleischman defines membership as the “need to overcome one’s individual skin, one’s isolation and fragmentariness, to have a group, an affiliation, a community.”⁴¹ Scientology has been engineered to fill this need of community within individuals of their church.⁴² They do it by giving them a process to follow that is focused, linear, and comprehensible. Even in instances where they are on their own to reach the Bridge of Freedom, there are many who are along this path as well.⁴³ There must be a community of people for the belief to continue. If a person fills the need of finding the significance in their life and has no one with whom to share it, there will be a sense of it being worthless. “It is not enough to feel a sense of witnessed significance, or

³⁸ Bunker: Tory C. Video 1

³⁹ Miller, 427

⁴⁰ One could say that this is proof Hubbard succeeded in collecting celebrities.

⁴¹ Fleischman, 89

⁴² Many would correct this statement to say that the church *appears* to fill the need for membership.

⁴³ There are certain levels where one audit oneself, for example.

lawful order, but a person must feel engaged in the body of the productive human community and human community.”⁴⁴

From the perspective of psychoanalysis, Fleischman observes that the need for membership and community can bring destructive consequences if it is manipulated. “The need for membership can deteriorate into a destructive force: discretely bounded, paranoid in-groups.”⁴⁵ Many cult leaders and groups understand the need that people have to be together within a community. However, what appears to be a warm, loving group of people believing the same principles, can turn into a destructive force. Many cults seek out those who are lonely and searching for answers in their lives.

Manipulation and Isolation

Cults use diverse seduction tactics to bring people into their groups. In the early parts of the recruiting process they shower the individual with catch phrases, like the “lovebombing” technique mentioned earlier, and information that looks to fulfill the needs that people have in their lives. They pass themselves off as loving and caring and only wanting to help the person in their life's ambitions. Scientology has the advantage of a mission that is so broad in scope and grandiose in its assumption, but it is also irrefutable.

Reitman describes her trip to a Scientology church in New York in a way that demonstrates how much of this works. In the lobby of the church, she observes different video-testimonials being given to visitors. The stated goals of Scientology confront her everywhere:

⁴⁴ Fleischman, 89

⁴⁵ Fleischman, 96

“Life without insanity or criminals or war,” along with the rights of people to “grow and prosper and to reach to great heights.” To most people, this sounds like a wonderful life and therefore an attractive group to join. Tactics like these seek to make people more at ease. “As recruits lower their defenses in this “loving” climate, intimate and seemingly caring conversations enable recruiters to assess the psychological and social status of prospects, to learn about their needs, fears, dependency potential, and possible resistances.”⁴⁶

“Steve,” an apostatized full-time member of Scientology posted instructions typically given to those “selling” courses.⁴⁷ Through the recruiting techniques, Scientology workers are taught to probe the possible inductee for what might be affecting their life in negative ways. Called “finding their ruin,” the hope is to cause enough shame that a certain amount of desperation emerges. This author has experienced the same technique during a stress test. After determining that he was not stressed, the Scientologist then probed for what I thought he wanted to change about his life but was unable. Presumably this would then be massaged into a pitch for courses they offer, and so on down the line.⁴⁸

Reitman also observed these questions coming to her when she was met by a recruiter on her visit to the church. “In the next hour or so, Laurie (the recruiter) asks me a number of questions: Am I married? Am I happy? What are my goals? Do I feel like I am living up to my potential?”⁴⁹ These questions follow the pattern of finding out the psychological and social status of the person.

As soon as a person has expressed initial interest in the cult beyond a casual encounter with a stress test, they become subjected to serious indoctrination attempts. There are constant

⁴⁶ Langone, 7

⁴⁷ A source like this should always be held in suspicion. “Steve” clearly has an anti-Scientology agenda. However, his information does correlate with other accounts, both verified and unverified.

⁴⁸ Or, more accurately, down the Bridge.

⁴⁹ Reitman, 9

and intensive group sessions designed to integrate the doctrine into the person. People are taken away from familiar relationships and are separated from “outsiders” who may seek to do damage to the indoctrination process.⁵⁰ In Scientology, clears go through this same process. They are commanded not to perform any of their “special abilities” in public. They are not to be observed by anyone outside the church to determine if they really have the abilities that are claimed. It is meant only for people within the church.⁵¹

Isolation from the outside prevents skepticism by those on the inside. Doubt and personal thinking are discouraged and punishable within cults. This is a mechanism employed by Scientologists as well. Inductees are taught that only the Auditors and the E-meters can determine when a person is able to go up to the next level. They have control and the ability to make a member go through more and more auditing sessions if doubt has crept into the mind of the member.⁵² In fact, the whole point of auditing is to rid the person of any doubt in regard to Scientology and the existence of life. “Indeed, one could usefully think of Scientology as an elaborate and most effective behavior modification program in which potent reinforcement schedules are employed to cause individuals to learn how to act like clears and to keep their doubts and problems to themselves.”⁵³

⁵⁰ This was a major issue in all of the interview cited by this paper. Separation from families is especially important if the others are against Scientology. The church will also filter or deny communication from families, in an effort to foil attempts at rescue.

⁵¹ The reason for this is historical. Hubbard's first attempt at demonstrating the powers of the world's first “clear” were embarrassing. She was completely unable to make good on any of his promises during a very public demonstration. Undeterred, however, Hubbard simply developed this policy. Thus, it is designed to avoid doubt by both outsiders and insiders.

⁵² These special auditing sessions are called “Sec-Checks.” They are expensive, and those in charge require them if a Scientologist is struggling in some way. It is taught that if one is struggling, then it is their fault.

⁵³ Stark, 133

Concluding Remarks From Analysis

We have made no pretense about open-mindedness or fairness in assessing cults or Scientology. From the psychoanalytical understanding and a religious/theological point of view, Scientology represents a significant danger to those involved. Granted, this is exactly why the church has long been at war with psychology and psychiatry. The latter two fields first sounded the alarm that the practices dictated by Hubbard were not only useless in attaining their goals, but also had the potential to cause significant harm.

Their ruthless nature toward perceived threats and their willingness to deceive in order that their agenda might be furthered has evolved into a dizzyingly complex system of companies and organizations. The Citizens Commission on Human Rights, for example, claims to be an advocacy group for those abused by psychiatry. In reality, they are just a front group for the church. Other front groups include Naconon (drug rehab), Criminon (criminal rehab), Applied Scholastics (education techniques), and so on. While it is not “wrong” for a large group to have a diverse offering of services, their predatory nature nullifies any benefit they may offer.⁵⁴

They have infiltrated, and then subsequently been removed, public school districts, law enforcement agencies, city councils, and government entities. Some have even gone to prison for this. However, we do not wish to merely air dirty laundry. We feel that the truth speaks louder than rhetoric, hyperbole, and anecdotes.

The problem with an essay like this is that it invariably will fall short of encouraging compassion toward a group of people that have been caught up in a dangerous and parasitic

⁵⁴ At least any imagined benefit.

organization. Having an opportunity to play whiffle-ball one evening with a large group of full-time Sea Org members placed this entire project in a setting that became disturbingly concrete. To study Scientology (and other cultic groups) for a large portion of one's academic career, understanding the extreme danger it possesses, and ultimately to see how the organization has evolved into one that very much resembles the Narcissistic, Antisocial Sadist that founded it gives one a disturbing picture of the church. But to play catcher for a large whiffle-ball gathering with several nice, well-meaning people who are being actively manipulated by an evil organization will break one's heart in a way cannot be described.

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