Hrsg. v. Ingolf Christiansen, Christoph Polster
und Eduard Trenkel

Dialog in Konfrontation

. . . und die Wahrheit wird
euch frei machen

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Chapter 11

Stephen A. Kent: The Decline of Scientology[1]

Scientology is declining, and probably is on that slow path toward extinction that so many ideologies travel. It is difficult for us to recognize this trend, because we are so close to events, so I will identify some causes and indicators in this chapter. The long-term prognosis, however, seems clear. Now, I doubt that I will live sufficiently long to see the group disappear completely, since other ideologies linger for decades, and occasionally centuries, after they have lost their vitality. Nevertheless, Scientology likely will become only a chapter in a history book when someone in the future writes about the cults, ideologies, and new religions of the late 20^{th} and early 21^{st} centuries. That chapter will comment on how and why it was declining, if not dying, some sixty years after it began.

I reach this conclusion about its demise and eventual death by comparing the reality of Scientology in Europe and the United States today with a model of religious success developed several years ago (and later refined) by sociologist Rodney Stark (1987; 2003), based upon research that included the Mormons. Whatever we may think about Mormonism, it is one of the world's most successful newer religions, now with over fourteen million members worldwide (if official statistics are accurate)[2]. Scientology

1 This chapter is a revised version of my lecture entitled, *The European Versus American Debate Over Scientology, an Why Scientology is Dying,* delivered at the Conference on Cults, Dialog Centre Berlin on July 8, 2009. I extend thanks to Ann Normand who assisted me with editing.

2 For the most recent official statistics, see: <http://lds.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ\&zTi=1\&sdn=lds\&cdn=religion\&tm=27\&gps=238_495_1020_596\&f=00\&tt=2\&bt=1\&bts=1\&zu=http\%3A//lds.org/general-conference/conferences>.

will never reach that level of success. Globally, a high estimate of its membership might be 100,000, but probably there are far less than 75,000 or less, with numbers dropping[3].

In addition to using Stark's model of religious success as a framework for analyzing Scientology's future, this chapter also provides an opportunity to compare my evidence and conclusions with a recently published book chapter by James R. Lewis in his controversial book, Scientology (Lewis, 2009; see Manca, 2010b). Lewis's article offers critical comments about the model, which I do not do, but he finally decided that he *would, however, still like to apply Stark's model to the Church of Scientology so at least some sort of explanation is in order here* (Lewis, 2009: 127). What the model may help explain is why (outside of Denmark), *in other parts of the world, . . . Scientology is experiencing a healthy rate of growth* (Lewis, 2009: 137) and is experiencing *steadily expanding membership* (Lewis, 2009: 138). I evaluate the evidence very differently, so readers will get to choose whose arguments are the most convincing.

Part of my argument concerning the decline of Scientology is based upon the perception that the tension between it and society simply is too great. I will conclude this chapter, therefore, with reflections on the role that Thomas Gandow and the Dialog Centre-Berlin played in informing Germans (and others) about aspects of Scientology that challenged or violated widely held societal values.

3 While I am aware of problems related to reliance on non-official Internet sites, I must say that various Scientology critics have done a rigorous job of addressing the ›Scientology membership‹ issue. Among these discussions are: <http://lermanet.com/howmany.htm> and: http://www.xenu.net/archive/COS_members.html. My vague figure errs on the side of generosity.

Early Domination of a Societny

To begin, Stark measured the success of a religion according to whether it is able to dominate one or more societies (Stark, 1987: 12). For example, since the late 1840s Mormonism has dominated Utah, and has used Salt Lake City as the basis for its worldwide expansion (Gottlieb and Wiley, 1984). The Mormons moved to Utah after experiencing bitter opposition in the American states of Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois (Gottlieb and Wiley, 1984: 44). Thousands of Mormons departed these hostile states and migrated to the relatively unsettled territory of Utah (at the time under the control of Mexico).

Compare that migration and settlement story of Mormonism to Scientology in the 1960s, when L. Ron Hubbard had alienated governments in the United Kingdom (Foster, 1971), Rhodesia (Rhodesia Herald, 1966) the United States (see Atack, 1990: 142-143), Australia (Anderson, 1965), and elsewhere. Facing persecution if not prosecution in various lands, Hubbard went to the ocean. He developed his ocean-going Sea Organization in 1967 (Miller, 1987: 263-312), which (until late 1972) kept him away from the reaches of critical governments, but did nothing toward establishing Scientology within any society. Indeed, during this period, his efforts to gain government influence in Greece (Forte, 1981) and Morocco (Miller, 1987: 310-312) failed. I will talk later about whether it is reasonable to say that Scientology did establish an eventual strong presence in Clearwater, Florida, but even if I were to say that it did, its success is far less complete than was the Mormons' domination in Utah. Consequently, on this basic measure-achieving domination over one or more societies early in its history, Scientology has not succeeded. Let me get more specific by delving deeper into Stark's model about what new religions likely must do to succeed.

1. Retain Cultural Continuity with Conventional Faiths (Stark, 1987: 13-15; 2003: 261)

The Mormons claimed that their faith was an extension of Christianity, and that the book of Mormon was an extension of the Christian gospel. Now, many others and I see Mormonism as a new religion and not merely a Christian variant, but Mormonism was able to convince potential converts that it was Christian, and simply extended and completed it by having discovered its ›pure‹ and ›true‹ doctrines and spiritual lineages (see Kent. 2003b: 91-93; Stark, 2003: 261).

Scientology tries to market itself as just another religious group. This marketing takes several forms, including having ›ministers‹ wear clerical collars, advertising for church services, acquiring the right to marry, and conduct funerals, etc. Moreover, Scientologists are active in ecumenical religious groups (Church of Scientology International, 1998). The organization seeks legitimacy from mainstream faiths like Christianity, rather than from various New Age religions (or even science) with whom Lewis believes it has greater affinity (Lewis, 2009: 129-130).

What will forever keep Scientology isolated, however, from mainstream religions is its creation story. This story has no relation with any recognized scripture of any religion, and its content seems to reflect the science fiction background of Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard. As reported in the Los Angeles Times:

> *. . . a major cause of mankind's problems began 75 million years ago, when the planet Earth, called Teegeeach, was part of a confederation of 90 planets under the leadership of a tyrannical ruler named Xemu. Then, as now, the materials state, the chief problem was overpopulation.*
>
> *Xemu, the documents state, decided to take radical measures to overcome the overpopulation problem. Beings were captured on Earth and on other*

planets and flown to at least 10 volcanoes on Earth. The documents state that H-bombs far more powerful than any in existence today were dropped on the volcanoes, destroying the people but freeing their spirits-called thetans-which attached themselves to one another in clusters.

After the nuclear explosions, according to the documents, the thetans were trapped in a compound of frozen alcohol and glycol and, during a 36-day period, Xemu ›implanted‹ in them the seeds of aberrant behavior for generations to come. When people die, these clusters attach to other humans and keep perpetuating themselves.

(Sappell and Welkos, 1985; see Leiby, 1981)

This story is the target of many American comedians – Jon Stewart (Stewart et. al, 2010: 159), Stephen Colbert (Colbert, 2007: 60), the cartoon show, Southpark[4], etc. Outside of Scientology itself, no one takes the group's creation story seriously.

Further tension exists between Scientology and the dominant religion in Western countries-Christianity. In a 1963 Bulletin to his followers, Hubbard demeaned some basic Christian beliefs while at the same time acknowledged them. As he presented his views:

For a long while, some people have been cross with me for my lack of co-operation in believing in a Christian Heaven, God and Christ. I have never said I didn't disbelieve in a Big Thetan but there was certainly something very corny about Heaven et. al. Now I have to apologize. There was a Heaven. Not

4 One Internet site for the Southpark episode is:
`http://www.southparkstudios.com/clips/104274/what-scientologist-actually-believe`.

too unlike, in cruel betrayal, the heaven of the Assassins in the 12^{th} Century who, like everyone else, dramatized the whole track implants – if a bit more so.

Yes, I've been to Heaven. And so have you . . . It was complete with gates, angels, and plaster saints – and electronic implantation equipment. So there was a Heaven after all – which is why you are on this planet and were condemned never to be free again – until Scientology.

(Hubbard, 1963: 1; see Clearwater Sun, 1976)

Actually, Hubbard claimed to have been to Heaven twice. His portrayal of Christianity's idyllic afterlife as an implant station (where thetans receive brainwashing that eliminates their knowledge of their true nature) will never sit well with Christians who know of his comments.

2. Maintain a Medium Tension with Society (Stark, 1987: 15-16) – are strict, but not too strict (2003: 262-264; 267-268)

Successful groups like the Mormons stand in some tension with society, which partly explains why people remain as members. They see themselves as models for others, whom they hope to convert to what they believe is the path to salvation. These successful groups, however, are not in too much tension with their surroundings. Mormons, for example, do not drink or smoke, and have relatively traditional attitudes toward women. Otherwise, they are integrated into heterogeneous communities and occupations.

Many Scientologists, too, live in ordinary neighborhoods and work in a variety of jobs. (I discuss below, however, that these part-time members now are facing significant financial pressure to retake courses or receive training that they already have fin-

ished.) Probably people within this group would convey a message that Scientology courses and training improve their abilities to function in society, and therefore the form of Scientology that these people practice is in very little tension with society. (Potential conflict may arise if and when they need extended leaves-of-absence from work in order to take higher-level courses and training.) Several of Scientology's doctrines and practices, however, raise the tension with society too high for non-members to feel tolerant toward it.

First is its disconnection policy-where Scientologists have to break off contact with family members and others who are critical of the organization (Atack, 1990: 318-320). Scientologists insist that Hubbard cancelled the policy in 1968 (Hubbard, 1968b), yet critics insist that members still practice it. In his resignation letter to Scientology spokesperson, Tommy Davis, longtime Scientologist Paul Haggis wrote:

> *. . . I was online doing research and chanced upon an interview clip with you on CNN. The interview lasted maybe ten minutes-it was just you and the newscaster. And in it I saw you deny the church's policy of disconnection. You said straight-out there was no such policy, that it did not exist.*
> *I was shocked. We all know this policy exists. I don't have to look any further than my own home. You might recall that my wife was ordered to disconnect from her parents because of something absolutely trivial they supposedly did twenty-five years ago when they resigned from the church. This is a lovely retired couple, [who] never said a negative word about Scientology to me or anyone else I know-hardly raving maniacs or enemies of the church. In fact it was they who introduced my wife to Scientology.*

> *Although it caused her terrible personal pain, my wife broke off all contact with them . . . For a year and a half, despite her protestations, my wife did not speak to her parents and they had limited access to their grandchild. It was a terrible time. That's not ancient history, Tommy. It was a year ago.*
>
> *(Haggis, 2009?)*

Scientology's disconnection policy resembles shunning and similar isolating practices that other groups (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and conservative Mennonites) use against perceived critical or disobedient defectors. In all cases, however, members of the wider society react with disdain toward it, partly because of the emotional damage it can cause among family members and former friends.

A second policy that keeps tension between Scientology and society high is the fair game policy. The initial fair game policy from 1967 declared that a person who received a ›fair game‹ designation was a ›suppressive person‹ who:

> *[m]ay be deprived of property or injured by any means by any Scientologist without any discipline of the Scientologist. May be tricked, sued or lied to or destroyed.*
>
> *(Hubbard, 1967)*

When, in 1968, Hubbard cancelled the practice of declaring people to be fair game, he did so because

> *[i]t causes bad public relations. This P/L [Policy Letter] does not cancel any policy on the treatment or handling of an SP [suppressive person].*
>
> *(Hubbard, 1968a)*

Former members, critics, lawyers, judges (see Kumar, 1997), politicians, reporters, and academics (see Kent, 2003a: Sections

7 and 8) have experienced it and written about it, and everyone who learns of Scientology's vindictiveness is offended, since it flies in the face of open and public debate within democratic societies.

Third is Scientology's anti-psychiatry campaign (see Kent, 1999a: 149-151; 1999b: Section 3.5). Hubbard's antipathy toward psychiatry dates back to the 1950s, and he specifically declared war against it in 1968 (Hubbard, 1968c). Through groups such as the *Citizens Commission on Human Rights*, Scientologists launch continuous attacks against psychiatry, trying to destroy it. Their criticisms, however, lack nuance or any degree of praise for psychiatric successes, and in their furor Scientologists look like a bunch of rigid, anti-scientific ideologues. They lose their credibility through their shrillness. In sum, Scientology's hostility toward psychiatry is based largely upon ideas that Hibbard developed in the 1950s and 1960s, but *the values forwarded by the Church no longer address important areas of discussion in society at large* (Andersen and Wellendorf, 2009: 161).

Fourth, Scientology's decision-making processes are totalitarian and undemocratic, in obvious contrast with the governmental structures within the societies in which it strives for acceptance. No decision – making assembly or body exists in Scientology where members can debate or discuss issues. Its desire to impose that authoritarian structure on society makes it a threat to the democratic state, and Germany has responded appropriately to its threat.

Noteworthy is Lewis's discussion concerning tension with society, since he at least raised the possibility that Scientology's ›internal justice system‹ might have raised its tension with society to an unacceptable degree. Having realized that aspects of this justice system might strike some people as inappropriately harsh, he finally left the issue unresolved (Lewis, 2009: 132). If and when people learn, for example, about Scientology's court

and penal systems, then indeed they are likely to feel that these far exceed minimum levels of tolerability.

These and other policies and practices have made Scientology appear as an extremist group that is very hostile to democratic society. Too much tension exists, therefore, for most members of society to be willing to tolerate it. Lack of societal tolerance toward Scientology in countries such as France, Germany, Belgium, and increasingly in Australia has its counterpart within Scientology: lack of tolerance or flexibility toward the societies in which it operates:

> *. . . through the interdiction against modifying, however slightly, the doctrines and the tech, SMI [Scientology Missions International] imposes a strict discipline all over its international centers that must remain perfectly obedient to [the Religious Technology Center] and SMI authorities. The center, that is Hubbard's word and the presidency, firmly holds together the pioneers who are otherwise sent into the world to play the game of survival of the fittest. In the case of SMI, missions do not adapt to their foreign milieu; they force their neophytes to conform to what the pioneers teach.*
>
> *(Rigal-Cellard, 2009: 332)*

While this author suggests that such strictness may be helping Scientology expand (since non-Western people may see it as a form of Westernization [Rigal-Cellard, 2009: 332]), it is easier to see how such strictness hinders the spread of the group in countries where people expect to combine ideas and practices into new syntheses.

3. Achieve Effective Mobilization: Strong Governance and High Level of Individual Commitment (Stark, 1987: 16-18)

Scientology certainly maintains a high level of commitment among many of its members, especially members of the Sea Organization. The problem with its commitment demands, however, is that they are far too extreme. Its most committed members burn-out from long hours, too few breaks or vacations, and too little money[5]. In addition, the Sea Organization developed an internal culture of violence that undermines leadership's authority.

In his revised model, Stark (2003: 264) concluded that *[r]eligious movements will succeed to the extent that they have legitimate leaders with adequate authority to be effective.* Adequate authority depends upon both ›doctrinal justifications‹ and members who *perceive themselves as participants in the system of authority* (Stark, 2003: 264). Judged by Stark's criteria, Scientology's current leader, David Miscavige (b. 1960) suffers a crisis of legitimacy, partly because of the culture of violence that apparently he fosters. Increasing numbers of accounts from former Sea Organization members report that Scientologists routinely scream at each other; and that Miscavige and others beat-up people *hit them, kick them, and generally humiliate them (Childs and Tobin, 2009; Goldstein, 2010; Tobin and Childs, 2009).*

Increasingly, high-level Sea Organization members are defecting, and then talking to the media and/or Internet-posting about their experiences. People working under these abusive conditions are not likely to feel as if they are participating in leadership's decisions, and are most likely to feel fear, rather than respect, towards those in power.

5 See, for example, the summaries and links at <http://youfoundthecard.com/sea-org.php>.

Sea Organization defections may prove deadly to Scientology's future, since its members perform extraordinary amounts of work for the organization for very little pay and generally few compensations. Stark concludes that the growth of religious movements depends upon *a highly motivated, volunteer religious labour force* (Stark, 2003: 265), and superficially at least, the Sea Organization resembles his description. He apparently does not believe that a coerced labour force is nearly as effective for aiding a group's expansion, presumably because these labourers will slow down or stop whenever they can. Whatever degrees of volunteerism, however, within Sea Organization members still exist, it will drain away under abusive, physically violent leadership actions.

One recent action by Scientology leadership is worth mentioning. Scientology leaders have *recover[ed], verif[ied] and restore[d]* (so they claim) all of Hubbard's early books and lectures[6]. They claim that they have fixed transcription and editors' errors, so that now members should re-buy all of these publications and should re-take courses that they already have passed because the source materials now are pure. The implications, however, for current members are grave. They face thousands of euros in expenses and maybe hundreds of hours of coursework. By making these so-called corrections, the Scientology leaders have revealed that the writings that members thought were accurate and standard tech – Hubbard's own and true words – had been inaccurate! Surely, these circumstances are demoralizing and confusing for many members. These revisions, however, may bring-in a lot of money to the organization during a time when revenues probably have been dropping from reduced membership and the general economic downturn.

6 For Scientology's version of what these ›corrections‹ were about, see: <http://www.scientology.org/david-miscavige/completion-of-the-golden-age-of-knowledge.html>.

4. Can attract and maintain a normal age and sex structure (Stark, 1987: 18; 24-25)-and maintain adequate fertility (Stark,2003: 265).

A successful religion needs a range of ages and relatively equal genders. The old teach and socialize the young; those in the middle work and sustain the group; the children become the next generation of members; etc. Children are important because they can continue the tradition. Scientology has tried to keep its children by forming its own schools for the offspring of its members who work in local organizations, as well as for non-members whose children (for whatever reasons) may not do well in regular schools[7]. More generally, however, the organization is hostile toward children, as it pressures its most devoted female members – those in the Sea Organization who get pregnant – to either abort or leave their Sea Organization positions (Childs and Tobin, 2010). Three young adult women, including Jenna Miscavige Hill (who is niece of the current leader) have created a website called Ex-Scientology Kids[8], where they and others tell their stories about what life was like for children and teens. People's accounts of their youth in Scientology are filled with examples of exploitation, abuse, neglect, and suffering at the hands of callous adults. The image damage to Scientology is significant[9].

7 For a critical discussion of Scientology's schools, see: <http://members.chello.nl/mgormez/childabuse/schools.html>.

8 The web site is: <http://exscientologykids.com/storiesindex.html>.

9 Lewis (2009: 135) speculates that the fact that non-Sea Organization Scientologists *even can drop out of Scientology completely for a period of time and then return to the organization without suffering the kind of social ostracism they might experience from more traditional religious bodies I would hypothesize that this fluid boundary is a big plus for returning children.* He offers no examples to support this hypothesis, nor does he mention the possibility of having to take or retake courses upon returning, depending upon what one's experiences with the outside world had been.

At the other end of life, Scientology has not made adequate preparations for its elderly. Many researchers have heard stories of elderly or ill Scientologists being driven out of the organization, or simply working until they died. Even for people in the middle age ranges, Scientology is a hard group in which to be a member. It is so hard because members must leave their local areas for months at a time in order to take costly, advanced courses. Few people who hold normal jobs can take-off so much time from work. Consequently, Scientology has made it extremely difficult for ordinary people to advance in the organization. They cannot afford it, and they cannot afford the time commitment. My understanding, therefore, is that many members do menial jobs or seasonal labour so that they can meet the time-commitments. Consequently, many have low-paying, low-status jobs (unless they are business-owners who can arrange lengthy stretches away from their livelihoods).

5. Occur within a Favourable Social Ecology (Stark, 1987: 19-22; 2003: 266)

a. Religion is Relatively Unregulated (Stark, 1987: 19)

Here we see the difference between Europe and the United States. The United States gave Scientology charitable status based in part upon its religious claims, although some would argue that Scientology abused the legal process by flooding the Internal Revenue Service with thousands of lawsuits (Kent, 2001). Germany, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and other countries, however, have refused to give the organization a charitable status equivalent to mainstream religions. Indeed, the general European response to Scientology has varied from chilly to hostile. To cite just a few examples: in 2009 a French court *convicted the French branch of the church of ›organized fraud‹ and said that it had systematically tricked recruits out of their savings*

(Sachs, 2009). Earlier, *the founder of the Lyons branch was sent to prison for involuntary manslaughter in 1997 after the suicide of a debt-ridden church member. In 1999, five church members were found guilty of fraud* (Sachs, 2009). Throughout the 2000th, *the German domestic intelligence service [kept] the Church of Scientology under surveillance as a potential threat to democracy*, while *Belgian prosecutors [were] building a blackmail case against it for 11 years* (Sachs, 2009). In 2010, Italian police in Turin raided a Scientology office and reportedly discovered *personal information related to judges, magistrates, journalists, and police who had reportedly been deemed hostile* to it (Squires, 2010). On the far side of Europe, Russian police have raided the Moscow Scientology center (Press-Enterprise, 1999), and in 2010, Russian officials declaimed some of Hubbard's books and recordings to be ›extremist‹ and banned them from the country (APP, 2010). In Australia, a new charities commission likely will take a hard and critical look at the organization's charitable status[10].

In summary, the governmentally supported position of Scientology in the United States differs dramatically from other governments' responses to the organization. These other responses, shared by various European and Australian officials, contain the assumption that Scientology is harmful and therefore requires monitoring and/or restrictive legislation.

b. Conventional Faiths are Weakened by Secularization or Social Disruption (Stark, 1987: 20-22).

Scientology is caught in a difficult position. In most places around the world, Scientology insists that it is a religion. Consequently, it has suffered increased scrutiny after 9/11 and the

10 For an Australian television news broadcast on the creation of a charities commission and its likely impact on Scientology, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=623g2Jj166Y>.

terrorist bombings in London and Madrid, which hurt the images of all high-demand faiths that appeared to be fundamentalist. From another perspective, however, Scientology also claims to be secular – in its drug treatments, educational programs, business training, etc. These claims hinder Scientology's attempts to receive blanket religious or charitable endorsements outside of America, and they open up its programs to secular, scientific scrutiny. In essence, Scientology suffers from its image as a fanatical group, and suffers from the lack of scientific verification of its key programs like Narconon (claiming to purge the body of drug and radiation residues [see California Healthy Kids Resource Center, 2005; Manca, 2010a: 3, 13-14]). Claims about techniques that purge drugs are testable and open up aspects of Scientology to empirical verification – a situation that, according to Stark, new religions want to avoid. *New religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that their doctrines are non-empirical,* he surmised (Stark, 2003: 262). Studies, therefore, that cast doubt on the theory and practice of Narconon, indirectly raise doubts about the veracity of many other Scientology claims[11].

c. Achieve at least local success within a generation (Stark, 1987: 21)

Scientology's biggest claims to success would be in parts of Los Angeles, and more importantly, in Clearwater, two American cities where it has major offices. In Clearwater alone, Scientology owns nearly thirty properties (Girardi, 2008). To claim, how-

11 For example, on an anti-Narconon web page <http://www.california-rehab-referral.com/>, the text cautions against the program by criticizing Scientology. For example, it asserted that Narconon *books instruct Training Routines that are Scientology brainwashing tactics.*

ever, that Scientology has succeeded in receiving local acceptance very much overstates reality.

Compare Scientology to the early Utah Mormons. The Mormons ran the government and legal systems, they started a newspaper, and they established a university. Devout members worked in normal jobs. Nothing comparable has occurred in either Los Angeles or Clearwater. While ›public‹ Scientologists live within secular communities, the most devoted Scientologists – Sea Organization members – live, sleep, and work in isolated facilities. Moreover, they have little money to spend beyond meeting very basic needs. The organization has not established a significant media presence as the Mormons did with the Deseret News or the Moonies have done with the Washington Times. Consequently, recently the organization was unable to stop a series of damning articles about current leader David Miscavige's allegedly abusive management style that the local secular press, the St. Petersburg Times, published. This failure by the organization occurred despite efforts in the 2000s to improve its image and the socio-political influence within Clearwater itself. Scientology hired two local, influential non-members whose task was to reduce or eliminate hostility toward the organization so that members and non-members could work together on numerous community projects (Farley, 2004). Scientology's success, therefore, at establishing itself locally only has been marginally successful, with limited inroads into political and community circles that likely get damaged every time local media presents new exposés.

6. *Maintain Dense Internal Network Relations without Becoming Isolated (Stark, 1987: 22-23; 2003: 266-267)*

Certainly Scientology has developed dense social network relations, even publishing local business directories of members so that Scientologists know where to take their business. The

members who live and work ›in the world‹ are ›public‹ Scientologists, and (as Lewis indicates) they are *plugged into other social networks through which it is possible for non-Scientologists to become involved* (Lewis, 2009: 137). He indicates that over half of Scientology recruits enter through friendship networks (Lewis, 2009: 138), but says nothing about the extent that these same networks can provide opportunities for reconversion.

Its elite members, however, are isolated in the Sea Organization, and members at all levels are cut-off from critical relatives and friends. Depending upon in which facilities they live and work, Sea Organization members may have little if any contact with the outside world-primarily limited to small purchases in local businesses (often ones owned by other Scientologists). Consequently, its dense internal network relations serve to maintain the group's isolation, making recruitment difficult to accomplish through social and family networks, and especially making it difficult to obtain societal support.

7. *Resist secularization (Stark, 1987: 23-24); conduct effective socialization (Stark, 2003: 268)*

In the context of our discussion, if we include within the concept of secularization the non-theological material that is antagonistic toward the organization, we can examine the impact of the Internet on the organization. An extraordinary amount of critical secular material is on the Internet, and Scientology simply cannot control it. Against the Internet, therefore, Scientology is fighting a losing battle. With the advent of the technically skilled network of opponents called Anonymous, it has to contend with countless critical pieces on YouTube and the Internet in general as part of an anti-Scientology effort called Project Chanology (Herwig, 2010). Now, many potential (and even current) members likely get on the Internet in order to check-out the group, and they encounter volumes of critical material. This critical mate-

rial is doing damage, as demonstrated by the earlier example of member Paul Haggis whose Internet surfing led him to uncover a major spokesperson's lie about the group's disconnection policy.

It remains to be seen what long-standing impact Anonymous will have, and whether it survives over an extended period of time. What seems to be happening in America, however, is that various generations of Scientology critics are networking, and social networking is key to long-term survival. Anonymous did make crucial mistakes at the beginning of its campaign when it said that it wanted to ›dismantle‹ and ›destroy‹ Scientology (Shanahan, 2008), and two Anonymous sympathizers subsequently were convicted for hacking Scientology websites (Valley News, 2010). For these and other actions, Scientology produced a YouTube message claiming that Anonymous was a terrorist group[12]. The mixture, however, of older Scientology opponents with younger, less experienced protestors has brought stability to the Anonymous anti-Scientology movement, so at least it will be around for several more years. The anti-Scientology information, however, that Anonymous and critics sympathetic to it have placed on the Internet make it increasingly difficult for one Scientology generation to socialize the next.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the prognosis for Scientology is poor. It has not gained control over a society or territory thus far in its career, nor is it likely to in the future. Its greatest territorial success is its presence in Clearwater, Florida, but the existence of an independent newspaper (the St. Petersburg Times) outside of the group's control means that critical information about Scientology likely will continue to enter public consciousness. This

12 Scientology's earliest response to Anonymous on YouTube seems to be: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Covp7yUKAiQ>.

newspaper, and the Los Angeles Times (based in the other city in which Scientology has a significant presence), both have published summaries of Scientology's creation story involving Xemu-a story that creates an unbridgeable gap between Scientology and other (especially Christian) ›religious‹ groups.

Some of Scientology's doctrines and policies, such as disconnection and fair game, show the degree of tension that exists between it and the societies in which it operates. Moreover, its rigid, anti-psychiatric position seems shrill and ideological; and its decision-making structure is authoritarian. These and other factors led me to conclude that the tension between Scientology and society is too high to facilitate the group's smooth growth and expansion. Likewise, the demands that the group puts upon its most committed members, those in the Sea Organization, are far too strenuous. Even the financial pressures to repurchase ›corrected‹ Hubbard books and lectures places a significant financial burden on long-time members. The Sea Organization prohibition on children eliminates the possibility of intergenerational socialization, and the Internet has proven to be an uncontrollable source of negative information about the group.

Legally, Scientology's charitable status in the United States is not replicated in many other important countries, with long-standing governmental hostility continuing in (among other countries) France, Belgium, Russia, and Germany, and similar opposition growing in Australia. Supporting this widespread hostility is the leadless Internet group, Anonymous, that has conducted global protests against Scientology and continues to be an oppositional presence to it on the Internet and on the ground (through protests at Scientology facilities and events).

Taken together, these factors indicate a bleak future for Scientology. Lewis, however, concludes differently. He began his chapter with a quote from another scholar, William Sims Bainbridge, which said that, *[w]hile it is impossible to predict the fate of Scientology as a particular religious organization, we must*

suspect that some religion very much like Scientology will be a major force in the future of our civilization (Bainbridge, 1987: 75; quoted in Lewis, 2009: 117). He concluded his chapter with the opinion:

> *It appears that there are more than a few individuals who hear the Church being criticized in a variety of media, become curious, decide to look into Scientology for themselves and then join. Thus, and a little ironically, the people and agencies that attack the Church most vociferously end up being Scientology's best friends.*
>
> *(Lewis, 2009: 138)*

It remains unknown how Lewis squares this opinion with the obvious number of people who read Anonymous's criticisms of Scientology and then participated in international protests against it. Perhaps one way was to ignore the presence of Anonymous and the Internet completely, since neither term appears in his book's index. If Scientology's critics are indeed its best friends (as Lewis claims), then the message that many of these friends are conveying to the organization is that its human rights and ethical abuses are intolerable in modern democracies.

Unintentionally, Lewis mentioned a major factor that likely is putting enormous burdens on Sea Organization members, contributing to their defections. Lewis knew that Scientologists must submit their weekly progress reports on Thursdays, and *[a]ll Scientology staffers are motivated to be Up Stat [i.e., performance statistics higher than the week before], resulting (not necessarily consciously) in exaggerated statistics* (Lewis, 2009: 120). Said differently, the organization punishes staff whose reports do not indicate continuous growth, which I suspect is impossible to represent in (what I believe to be) a long period of overall decline. Consequently, pressure grows on Sea Organization members (and public members who run local missions)

to either lie about achievements, income, and other indicators of growth, or be punished for honest reporting about their decline. Tensions among and within staffers are likely to grow, resulting in heightened punitive reprisals and greater individual burn-out. At some point, defections from the Sea Organization may reach a critical mass, beyond which the organization will have, trouble operating on such a global, and grandiose, scale.

The rash of high-level Sea Organizations has led Lewis to reconsider his published conclusions that Scientology is expanding. In a January 2011 ›open letter‹ from him published on the Internet, Lewis backtracked: *Current events have completely overturned my evaluation of the CoS [Church of Scientology] as a rapidly expanding religion. The relatively recent defection of large numbers of long-time, high-level Scientologists – some of the organizations' most experienced administrators and others with expertise in delivering the highest levels of Scientology technology – bodes poorly for the future of the Church. In particular, the pattern of solid growth I analyzed just a few years ago seems suddenly to have ground to a halt* (Lewis, 2011). The fact that Lewis places so much weight on these defections without identifying other indicators of decline suggests to me that Lewis's application of Stark's growth model was superficial, but at least now we share a similar conclusion.

In addition, Lewis acknowledged new census data that he did not have at the time of his edited book's publication. Data from the 1990 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) placed the number of American Scientologists to be in the neighborhood of 45,000. Figures from the 2001 survey raised that number to 55,000. Lewis cited these figures as part of his evidence concerning Scientology's growth (Lewis, 2009: 121). Subsequently however, the 2008 data appeared, with Scientology's numbers dropping to 25,000[13]. Although Lewis realizes the imprecision

13 The comparative census information for 1990, 2001, and 2008 is on-line

that exists around these numbers, they do suggest a dramatic drop in membership, which subsequent census data from America and elsewhere are likely to support (Lewis, 2011). Scientology is in deep, deep trouble.

Afterward: Thomas Gandow's facilitation of my entry into the european human rights battle against scientology

Throughout the 1990s, Germany and other European countries received annual criticism from the United States Department of State concerning the respective countries' reactions to Scientology. Thomas Gandow, however, wanted to shift the discussion away from these American criticisms and onto critiques that were coming out of North America about Scientology that the State Department was ignoring. At that time, I was one of the few North American scholars (I carry both American and Canadian passports) who was publishing academically critical analyses of the group, and also had become a resource for reporters in various countries. Consequently, Thomas invited me to Germany in 1997, and I gave a series of presentations on Scientology that literally transformed my own scholarship at the same time that it showed Europeans that some non-Americans were critical of Europeans' cautions around that group.

During that first visit, Thomas had me on a whirlwind speaking schedule – to the 27th Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag in Leipzig; a student presentation and a private presentation at a nobleman's house in Berlin; and even a presentation in Lublin, Poland. Months later, in September, I returned for more presentations – this time to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bonn. Later that month, I accepted a federal governmental invita-

at:
http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2010/tables/10s0075.xls

tion to speak in Bonn about Scientology before the Bundestag's Enquete Commission, and to it I summarized my research on Scientology's forced labour and re-indoctrination program, the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF). The Commission referred to my testimony in its final report (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998: 150 n. 135; see 203; 347)[14].

14 Worth showing here is how sloppy two American researchers were when writing about my Enquete Commission presentation. In a book that was harshly critical of the anti-cult movement, Anson Shupe and Susan Darnell wrote: *In July, 1997 Dr. Kent was flown to Brandenburg, German, by the German Evangelic Church and the Social Democratic party to put his ACM [anti-cult movement] spin on so-called ›youth sects‹. His hosts were in large part Sektenexperten (or sect experts), usually German pastors anxious to quash competitors in a society always (since Hitler's day) unsympathetic to the NRMs (new religious movements) . . .*
Generally, Dr. Kent's trip was a failure. A special German parliamentary commission interviewed experts and examined evidence in the activities of cults and sects over a two-year period and found that, in most cases, the NRMs pose no real danger either to the state or to the public (Shupe and Darnell, 2006: 136).
Astonishing, Shupe and Darnell apparently wrote much of this analysis from their imaginations, not from sources. First, the commission's hearing was in Bonn, not Brandenburg. Second, the German federal government paid for the trip, not a church party and a political party. Indeed, the Commission's final report indicated that the forum at which I presented was under the aegis of the Speaker of the German Bundestag (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998: 203). Third, I went there to discuss Scientology, especially its RPF program, not to give an anti-cult spin to so-called youth sects. Fourth, my trip was anything but a failure. If Shupe had bothered to examine a copy of the commission's final report, he would have seen that it specifically mentioned my RPF work on page 151. In a footnoted discussion about total institutions, it reported that they can attempt to re-educate people toward their own organizational purposes. It then listed a number of techniques that these groups use. *According to studies by the Canadian sociologist St. A. Kent, who described his work to the Enquete Commission, the Scientology Organization uses control techniques of this kind in its coercive institutions known as [the] ›Rehabilitation Project Force‹ (RPF), in order to socialize recalcitrant members of the so-called Sea-Org.* It cited a paper on the topic that I had presented at an academic conference (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998: 150 n.135; see 347). Their fourth mistake was to portray

Through these trips, Thomas introduced me to colleagues in Denmark, which led to a December 1999 presentation in Aarhus. I returned again to Berlin in February 2000 for a series of lectures that Thomas organized. On one of these (possibly earlier) trips, Thomas had arranged for me to meet Ursula Caberta, and in October 2000 I returned to Germany once more, this time to help launch the publication of my lengthy study on the RPF that the Hamburg Working Group on Scientology published under her direction (Kent 2000). During this trip, Thomas also arranged for me to present on the RPF in a press conference in Berlin, plus give a lecture on child sexual abuse in alternative religions to university students. These German lectures, in turn probably led to subsequent invitations to lecture in Belgium, Austria, London, and Ireland. My most recent round of lectures that Thomas organized took place in July 2009, with another lecture to students, a lecture to psychiatrists about Scientology's war on psychiatry, and an earlier version of this chapter, delivered as a paper at a Dialog Centre – Berlin conference. Taken together, through Thomas's invitations and influence, I have lectured to hundreds of students, politicians, policy makers, and citizens in Germany and other places in Europe about Scientology and cults in general.

my hosts on this trip *usually German pastors*. Since my host was the Enquete Commission of the German Bundestag, Shupe and Darnell should have looked at the credentials of the people on it. Of the twelve non-parliamentary members of the commission, only three had formal religious affiliations. Four held university appointments; two were provincial government officials; one was a judge; another was a social scientist with a PhD, and the twelfth was a psychologist with a PhD. Finally, Shupe and Darnell failed to indicate that the one group the Enquete Commission singled out as requiring special attention was Scientology. Its report stated that *it welcomed the observation of the Scientology Organization by Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and by the relevant state-level offices* (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998: 291). Rarely if ever I have seen so many mistakes in an academic book in such small amount of text.

In some modest ways, these trips that Thomas organized (or prepared the way for) helped Germans see that some North Americans shared their widespread concerns over Scientology's anti-democratic operations. Perhaps of greater importance, however, than these lectures was the impact that these trips had upon my scholarship. I made extensive use of material and perspectives that I had acquired in Europe in at least five articles and a book chapter (not to mention the RPF booklet that the Hamburg government printed). Probably the most influential article was a lengthy study (published in the German-based Internet journal, the Marburg Journal of Religion) on the French and German versus American debate over Scientology and human rights (Kent, 2001). This academic article catalyzed a French reporter, Bruno Fouchereau, to write a similar study that he published (in both French and English) in the influential internationally distributed newspaper, Le Monde Diplomatique (Fouchereau, 2001), using my article as a source and closing following its argument. Finally, Thomas reproduced some of my scholarship in his professionally produced magazine, Berliner Dialog, which got widespread distribution throughout Europe.

Because of these trips, I spent considerable time with Thomas and his wife, Ute. Without exception, they were uncompromisingly generous, exceedingly gratuitous with their time and resources, wonderful tour guides and travel companions, and witty friends. I hold the fondest memories one can of my time with them, and I wish Thomas and Ute Godspeed in their retirement. I owe Thomas an enormous professional and personal debt.

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