

SCIENTOLOGY'S VOCAL CRITICS by Bob Waldrep

What do Tom Cruise and John Travolta have in common other than being well-known actors? Most might correctly guess they are also well-known Scientologists. In fact, Scientology is probably best known due to the high public profile of these and other celebrity members, such as former *Cheers* star Kirstie Alley and MSNBC news host Greta Van Susteren. In fact, Scientology probably markets itself through its celebrity members more than any other religious group.

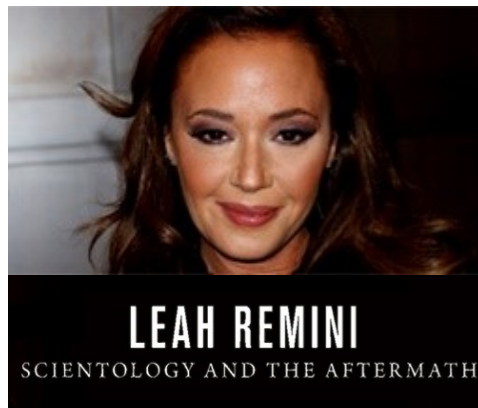
In a 2005 interview, Stephen Kent, a professor of sociology at the University of Alberta, said he believes, "America increasingly blends entertainment with news, to the neglect of important news items involving Scientology." Suggesting that Scientology uses its celebrities as ambassadors and to soften its image, Kent who has extensively studied and written about Scientology, went on to say, "They increasingly use their celebrities in a news-making fashion...They are public relations officers for Scientology, and part of their mission is to represent Scientology to the outside world and other governments."¹

Probably the best example of how these celebrities can promote and defend the teachings of Scientology is Tom Cruise's highly publicized attack on Psychiatry – which Scientology ridicules as having no validity – while promoting his film *War of the Worlds* in 2005. This led to a "war of words" with he and *Today Show* host Matt Lauer (Read about this in my article "Tom Cruise Phone Home" www.crosswindstore.org/free-info/)²

This begs the question, does the information provided by these celebrities accurately portray the teachings and practices of Scientology? Many who have left the group would say no, especially when it comes to its more controversial teachings. Even Cruise, though having accurately stated the teachings of Scientology about psychiatry during his debate with Lauer, did not reveal the truth when asked about other teachings of Scientology such as its connection to space aliens.

In recent years, a number of books have been written by former members exposing

the inner workings, beliefs and practices of Scientology. However, probably none of them were as well known to the general public (due to her "celebrity" stature) as Leah Remini who had been raised in Scientology from the age of nine and left in 2013. Remini had the credentials. She had starred in the hit network comedy *King of Queens*. She had been a host on the first season of *The Talk* and she had appeared on the highly popular, *Dancing With the Stars*.



She could speak, not only from her experiences in Scientology, but as a successful actress who had once used her celebrity to promote and defend Scientology. After leaving the group she wrote *Troublemaker: Surviving Hollywood and Scientology* a revealing look at her involvement in Scientology and what finally led her to leave.

Books by former members are nothing new nor are they the only means being used to bring Scientology under public scrutiny. Increasingly, producers and media outlets were developing documentaries about Scientology that were quite compelling. Knowing the power of film, Remini produced her own documentary, *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath*, which was broadcast on cable's A&E network as a seven-week series.

The first episode aired November 29, 2016 and 2.1 million viewers tuned in to watch it. And, while those numbers might be considered small for a major network program, they are quite astounding for a program on cable – particularly a documentary. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that over

half of those viewers, some 1.1 million, were in the highly sought 25-54 age demographic.³

If nothing else, these numbers indicate there is still an interest in Scientology and perhaps a lack of awareness about what these celebrities and other Scientologists actually believe. Remini had found an audience.

And while the celebrities in Scientology may believe their membership is like that of any other member, the treatment and attention given them is far different than that of the rank and file member. Like most celebrity members, Remini obviously did not understand this while part of the group or else turned a blind eye to it.

It is not simply the length of her documentary (seven episodes) that sets it apart from most other documentaries about Scientology – it is its emphasis. Rather than focus on what might be considered the outlandish beliefs of Scientology, Remini chose to put the spotlight on the abuses of its leadership, especially David Miscavige, its Chairman of the Board, who had assumed leadership with the death of its founder in 1986.

The story is told through interviews with other former members – all of whom had been involved in Scientology for twenty years or more before leaving and had risen to positions of leadership. Through first-hand experiences, they were much more knowledgeable about the abuses of Scientology than Remini who led the more sheltered life of a celebrity. They also knew the "abuse" could follow them even after their departure. In fact, many had told their story before and already suffered for it.

Scientology has aggressively sued those who make public statements against the Church or make public its secret beliefs, or "Tech" (technology). They also harass and try to discredit opposers through "Fair Game", a practice Hubbard began as a means to control enemies or detractors.

Ex-members who speak out against Scientology are labeled SPs, "suppressive persons," and are also subject to this policy and cut off

from family members who are still part of the group. Imagine a Mother leaves Scientology and her children remain in the group. If she speaks out and is labeled an SP, she will no longer be able to have contact with her children and grandchildren. This can be particularly devastating and controlling as evidenced by some of those interviewed by Remini.

Scientology's official stance is the "fair game" policy was canceled in 1968. However, based upon their experiences, many reporters and ex-members would say differently. One, Mike Rinder, a former high ranking ex-member and consultant for Remini's documentary, was subjected to this policy or its practice and offers film footage in the documentary to substantiate it. Remini and her film crew also offer footage of their being followed during the filming of her documentary.

Scientology's response to the A&E documentary is typical of how they handle critics and seems to offer further evidence in support of the assertion they continue to use "fair game" type practices. In their "official" response, Remini is depicted as a bitter failure who is simply trying to profit from her departure:

"Leah Remini has become what she once declared she never wanted to be known as: 'this bitter ex-Scientologist.' As *USA Today* wrote, Ms. Remini is 'as famous for being an ex-Scientologist as she is as an actress.' She needs to move on with her life instead of pathetically exploiting her former religion, her former friends and other celebrities for money and attention to appear relevant again."⁴

It goes on to assert the real reason Remini left was due to her stalking Scientology leadership and knowing she was about to be expelled from the group. The response even includes the claim Scientology is continuing to thrive, as if to say, "Take that Leah Remini":

"The Church has grown more in the past decade than in its first 50 years combined under the ecclesiastical leadership of Mr. Miscavige, a visionary parishioners and Church staff hold in the highest regard for carrying out the legacy of the Scientology Founder through the renaissance [it] is now experiencing."⁵

Remini's show casts Miscavige much differently. Some interviewed share personal stories of being physically abused by him. Though inappropriate under any circumstance, these

physical attacks were said to be brought on for such things as simply not being able to complete an assigned task – a task that was in many cases impossible to accomplish.

These are not new allegations. An article in the June 21, 2009 edition of the *Tampa Bay News* describes the scene at a meeting of some thirty Scientology leaders in which, "Miscavige gathered the group and out of nowhere slapped a manager named Tom De Vocht, threw him to the ground and delivered more blows. De Vocht took the beating and the humiliation in silence – the way other executives always took the leader's attacks."⁶

“[Scientology] is a hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a mafia-like manner.”

Time, May 6, 1991

Many former members also disagree with Scientology's growth claims believing its numbers are actually declining. However, one of those interviewed by Remini had a different take based on his position in Scientology having required him to visit numerous Church locations. He believes there is some truth to the claims if they refer to a numerical increase in property/buildings instead of membership. For, while the Church was investing large sums to acquire and build new properties, he found it wasn't unusual to find some were basically empty.

Writing for *Rolling Stone*, Janet Reitman seems to have come to the same conclusion when visiting Scientology's facility in Manhattan:

"The New York Org claims to receive more than 500 phone calls per day, and nearly as many visitors in a week. But aside from its staff, I find the place to be almost entirely empty. Seated alone in a small auditorium, I watch the film, which turns out to be an infomercial featuring a cast of "real" people talking about how Dianetics changed their lives, curing them of ailments ranging from cancer to depression."⁷

In addition to the allegations of physical abuse (some of which claim to have ended in death; google "Lisa Mcpherson" or visit lisamcpherson.org/), another abuse claimed by Remini

and those she interviewed is the financial loss or ruin that comes from spending tens, and even hundreds, of thousands of dollars on Scientology coursework and auditing sessions that are essential for advancing to higher levels. (Remini told *The Hollywood Reporter*, she gave three million dollars to the Church.)⁸ Remini and other ex-members have said members are encouraged to do whatever it takes to get the funds, even running up huge credit card debt or taking out loans or mortgages to pay for the materials.

Such allegations aren't new. In fact, *Time* reported similar claims over twenty-five years ago in its ground-breaking May 06, 1991 cover story, "The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power" by Richard Behar. The title indicates Behar found the organization to be money-centered and in the opening he states it:

"The Church of Scientology, started by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard to 'clear' people of unhappiness, portrays itself as a religion. In reality the church is a hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner." His conclusion, "...in the end, money is what Scientology is all about. As long as the organization's opponents and victims are successfully squelched, Scientology's managers and lawyers will keep pocketing millions of dollars by helping it achieve its ends."⁹

Addressing its litigious nature, Behar wrote, "Scientology devotes vast resources to squelching its critics...One of Hubbard's policies was that all perceived enemies are "fair game" and subject to being "tricked, sued or lied to or destroyed." Those who criticize the church - journalists, doctors, lawyers and even judges - often find themselves engulfed in litigation, stalked by private eyes, framed for fictional crimes, beaten up or threatened with death."¹⁰ On this point, he concludes, "One legal goal of Scientology is to bankrupt the opposition or bury it under paper."¹¹

One might wonder how *Time* and Behar escaped the attacks and litigation Scientology typically used against those who spoke out against it or revealed its secrets. They didn't. However, unlike others sued by Scientology, *Time* had the funds and the will to stay the course, spending millions of dollars defending the lawsuit. After several years and appeals by Scientology lawyers, the suit was finally dis-

missed in *Time's* favor.¹² It is likely due to *Time's* success that many other newspapers and periodicals have since been emboldened to write about the organization's secrets.

Other than its abusive practices and inflated numbers alleged in the film, what else does Scientology not want you to know? What are the secret practices learned only as one advances through the ranks of the Church? Perhaps, chief among them - its "alien" origin.

Scientology was founded in 1954 by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard and finds its basis in his book, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. In this book, Hubbard describes the basic problem of mankind is, what he calls, the reactive mind, or engrams:

"The entire physical pain and painful emotion of a lifetime, whether the individual 'knows' about it or not, is contained, recorded, in the engram bank... The engram and only the engram causes aberration and psycho-somatic illness."¹³ Hubbard claimed that the only cure is through Dianetic therapy which he said, "deletes all the pain from a lifetime."¹⁴

Concerning the need for this therapy he writes, "...all physical pain and painful emotion, no matter how the individual may think he has handled it, is capable of re-inflicting itself upon him from this hidden level, unless that pain is removed by dianetic therapy."¹⁵

Are there any exceptions? Not according to Hubbard who states, "Not one single exception has been found. In 'normal people,' in the neurotic and insane, the removal of these engrams wholly or in part, without other therapy, has uniformly brought about a state greatly superior to the current norm."¹⁶

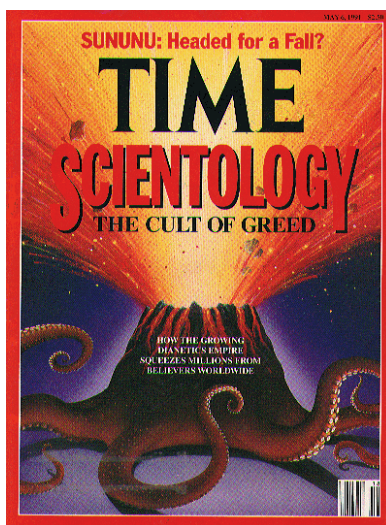
Basically this means, whether sane or insane, the problem, and its solution, is the same for everyone. This is done through Scientology's own version of "follow the yellow brick road" only their road is a bridge - "The Bridge to Total Freedom" - and instead of a Wizard, at the end waits a science fiction writer. And it is not a friendly scarecrow, lion and tin man that will accompany you but "auditors". Sound inviting?

Being on the Bridge requires following the teachings of Scientology and Dianetic Therapy. On this "road" one is promised they can become "clear" and rid themselves of these nasty engrams - the ultimate goal and promise of Scientology.

Addressing this Hubbard wrote, "In a clear, psycho-somatic illness has become non-existent and will not return since its actual source is nullified permanently...The dianetic clear is to a current normal individual as the current normal is to the severely insane."¹⁷

Were you to go through the auditing process, a trained auditor would have you hold what is basically a tin can in each hand. A wire clips to each can and connects to a device called an E-Meter. You are then asked a number of personal questions and thanks to the E-Meter, the auditor can determine if your answers are truthful. Naturally, some you know to be true will be deemed false as proof you are being deceived by engrams.

Time described auditing as, "...a crude psy-



chotherapeutic technique [for which Hubbard] created a simplified lie detector (called an 'E-meter') that was designed to measure electrical changes in the skin while subjects discussed intimate details of their past. Hubbard argued that unhappiness sprang from mental aberrations (or "engrams") caused by early traumas. Counseling sessions with the E-meter, he claimed, could knock out the engrams, cure blindness and even improve a person's intelligence and appearance."¹⁸ According to *Time's* findings a one hour auditing session could cost as much as \$1,000.

Upon reaching a state of clear, the person is identified as an "Operating Thetan" and begins a whole new series of levels, classified as OTs. In a 2009 series on Scientology, the *Tampa Bay Times* provided a simple explanation of these levels:

"At the top of the bridge [to freedom] are the 'Operating Thetan' or OT levels. In

Scientology, an OT is a being who no longer is dependent on his body or the physical world around him and is fully aware of his immortality as he passes through an endless succession of lifetimes in other bodies. Reaching the highest level - OT VIII - usually requires a Scientologist to spend years and tens of thousands of dollars on courses, counseling, books, lectures and other materials."¹⁹

Upon reaching OT VIII, a Scientologist is believed so powerful that they can manipulate MEST (Matter, Energy, Space, Time). Tony Ortega of the *Village Voice* has covered Scientology for years and, about this level, wrote, "Ron Hubbard enticed followers with promises that by the time they had reached OT VIII - and all of the disembodied alien souls that are attached to the rest of us had finally been removed from the OT VIII through years of auditing - the now unencumbered subject should have amazing powers: telekinesis, total recall, and basically the ability to make anything in the physical universe happen just with the use of your mind."²⁰

And as wild as that may seem, it is in the OT material (OT III) that one also learns what *Time* revealed, as perhaps the most bizarre secret teaching introduced by Hubbard - an alien connection:

"In the 1960s the guru decreed that humans are made of clusters of spirits (or "thetans") who were banished to earth some 75 million years ago by a cruel galactic ruler named Xenu. Naturally, those thetans had to be audited."²¹ Yes, Hubbard had incorporated aliens from another planet into the origin of Scientology.

In her article for *Rolling Stone* Reitman provides further insight regarding Xenu:

[Scientology] 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 then 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 of our emotional and physical problems but the root of all problems of the modern world.”²²

Interestingly, when Reitman was working on her article, Mike Rinder, an ex-member who served as a consultant for Remini’s documentary, was over Scientology’s Office of Special Affairs – the so-called public relations arm of the Church. According to Reitman, when asked about Xenu, Rinder almost went into a tirade claiming, “It is not a story, it is an auditing level,” he says, neither confirming nor denying that this theology exists.”²³

Even the animated sitcom *South Park* found the story of Xenu worthy of lampooning and produced an episode in which one of their characters, Stan, tries to join Scientology. During the auditing process Stan attains a higher reading than anyone other than Hubbard. Learning of it the Scientology leadership quickly proclaim Stan to be the reincarnation of L. Ron Hubbard. As such, they decide to tell him their “alien” secret. What follows is a very accurate animated representation of the beliefs held regarding Xenu. (Watch at southpark.cc.com/clips/104274/what-scientologist-actually-believe)

Do the creators of *South Park* fear retribution by Scientology? Apparently not. At the end of the episode Stan rejects Scientology concluding, like *Time*, it is, “Just a big-fat global scam.” To which various Scientologists crowded around him (including Tom Cruise) begin shouting, “We are going to sue you.” At this, Stan (actually, the creators of the show speaking through Stan) replies, “Okay, good, do it. I’m not scared of you. Sue Me!”²⁴

What has so emboldened the critics of Scientology? Last year HBO aired “Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief”, a documentary by Alex Gibney based on Lawrence Wright’s book, *Going Clear*. Like Remini’s se-

ries, this film documents many of the abusive practices alleged against Scientology. Prior to its broadcast Joe Nocera wrote an Op-Ed for the *New York Times* based on discussions he had with Gibney and Wright particularly as regards its treatment of the press and those who had left the Church.



According to Nocera, Gibney did not deny experiencing some harassment but noted “... the people who are really harassed these days aren’t journalists but those who have left the church.” But Marty Rathburn, a former high-ranking member believes even former members are getting less harassment, explaining to Nocera that “with more people leaving and talking about the church, it no longer has the resources to sic private eyes on all its critics [and that he] thinks the Internet has hurt the church, because it is far easier to find out information about it — and many of its supposed secrets are posted online for all to see.”²⁵ (To see just how much can be found online, Google the phrase “fishman affidavit” and you can read all the secret OT documents of Scientology.)

I hope for those who remain in Scientology as well as for those who have left and been declared SPs, that Lawrence Wright is correct when telling Nocera, “Part of the message here is that you don’t need to fear Scientology anymore.”²⁶ If the days when Scientology could hold on to disgruntled members by using fear and intimidation tactics are truly fading away, that is indeed good news. However, as long as any are still ensnared by Hubbard’s teachings, the Christian Church has a responsibility to join with former members, like Remini, and share the truth with those have been deceived.

The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Foot Notes

- 1 salon.com/2005/06/30/scientology_5/
- 2 Tom Cruise Phone Home
- 3 businessinsider.com/leah-reminis-scientology-show-ae-ratings-2016-11
- 4 scientologynews.org/statements/abc-news/church-of-scientology-statement-leah-remini.html
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- 8 hollywoodreporter.com/news/leah-remini-tom-cruise-urged-me-get-les-moonves-kill-60-minutes-scientology-story-950903
- 9 Time May 6, 1991 content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,972865,00.html
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 caselaw.findlaw.com/us-2nd-circuit/1120447.html
- 13 *Dianetics*, p. 11
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid. p. 67
- 17 Ibid. p. 12
- 18 *Time*, Ibid.
- 19 *Tampa Bay Times* tampabay.com/news/scientology/climbing-the-bridge-a-journey-to-operating-thetan/1062094
- 20 villagevoice.com/news/ed-bryan-ot-viii-demonstrates-the-power-of-scientologys-highest-levels-6683785
- 21 *Time*, Ibid.
- 22 *Rolling Stone* rollingstone.com/culture/news/inside-scientology-20110208
- 23 Ibid
- 24 southpark.cc.com/clips/104274/what-scientologist-actually-believe
- 25 *New York Times* February 24, 2015, p. A23 nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/joe-nocera-scientologys-chilling-effect.html?_r=0
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