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*Sacra*. 2021, vol. 19, iss. 2, pp. 52-64

ISSN 1214-5351 (print); ISSN 2336-4483 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/144743>

Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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# Scientology and Physical Violence

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## Introduction

As a new religious movement, Scientology has generated considerable interest amongst the academics of religion as well as the members of the international press. This essay focuses on the image of Scientology and its relation to physical aspect of violence from the position of the press and on the issues regarding physical violence in Scientology's different writings. The relation of violence and religion is a very widely discussed topic not only in religious studies but in all genres of literature and public speech. When the groups we call today new religious movements started to emerge, they slipped into the problem of violent behavior in many directions. As James T. Richardson commented in the book *Violence and New Religious Movements* (2011):

Evidence of violent practices committed either by new or minority religions or directed toward them by others abound in journalistic accounts and scholarly writings. (Richardson, 2011: 48)

As Richardson mentions, the media also plays a significant role in reporting violent incidents connected to new religious movements. With the growth of the Internet and social media, the accessibility of credible information has diminished due to the informational noise. This essay studies two questions regarding the role of violence in new religious movements, specifically Scientology:<sup>1</sup> What is the position of Scientology concerning physical violence in this context, and what can we expect from Scientology, or its followers, as far as physical violence is concerned, based on relevant quotes from the Scientology scripture? Therefore, the essay aims to analyze the role of violence in the press and other media discussing Scientology (with the specific emphasis on the Hungarian environment), linking the findings with selected examples of the Scientology scripture.

## The Appearance of Scientology and Physical Violence in Press

As this essay aims to find out which actual incidents of physical violence can be detected in connection with Scientology, an advanced keyword search for the combination of "Scientology+physical+violence" was administered on JSTOR,

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<sup>1</sup> Per the self-definition of Scientology: "The word Scientology, conceived by L. Ron Hubbard, comes from the Latin *scio* which means 'knowing, in the fullest meaning of the word' and the Greek word *logos* which means 'study of'. It means knowing how to know. Scientology is further defined as 'the study and handling of the spirit in relationship to itself, universes and other life.'" (What Does the Word Scientology Mean?, n.d.).

Google Scholar, and Google on October 4, 2020.<sup>2</sup> Then I tried to locate reports of actual incidents which credibly describe instances of physical violence committed by either Church officials, personnel, or notable members of the community. This search revealed the following:

- 846 hits on JSTOR,<sup>3</sup> out of which the hits were to be found in:
  - 257 journals
  - 201 book chapters
  - 3 research reports
  - 353 serials
  - 1 document
- 7 510 hits on Google Scholar and
- 2 110 000 hits on Google

Following and looking into the relevant<sup>4</sup> hits revealed that in the academic literature, one could not trace substantial evidence of physical violence or abuse exerted by the Church or its staff. By substantial evidence, I mean, for example, credibly documented cases, closed investigations, or court cases. However, there are reports from ex-members of different Scientology organizations or defectors from the religion.

It is challenging to verify how much these personal testimonies are authentic. Bryan R. Wilson, one of the “founding fathers” of the study of new religious movements and sectarianism, also ran into this phenomenon and wrote:

Informants who are mere contacts and who have no personal motives for what they tell are to be preferred to those who, for their own purposes, seek to use the investigator. The disaffected and the apostate are in particular informants whose evidence has to be used with circumspection. The apostate is generally in need of self-justification. He seeks to reconstruct his own past, to excuse his former affiliations, and to blame those who were formerly his closest associates. Not uncommonly the apostate learns to rehearse an ‘atrocious story’ to explain how, by manipulation, trickery, coercion, or deceit, he was induced to join or to remain within an organization that he now forswears and condemns. Apostates, sensationalized by the press, have sometimes sought to make a profit from accounts of their experiences in stories sold to newspapers or produced as books (sometimes written by ‘ghost’ writers). (Wilson, 1992: 19)

At the same time, it is also true that an incident or episode may be observed completely differently by different observers and especially by the subject of the incident. For example, an action of serving justice by a group on an individual – may it be thoroughly legitimate – can create negative feelings in the subject or

<sup>2</sup> The word “physical” was added to the search to try to focus more on the researched subject. Even with advanced search tools, the hits may include irrelevant writings.

<sup>3</sup> On February 14, 2021, a new search with the method happened just to follow on any significant change. 865 hits were found with practically the same breakdown. There were no new relevant writings published.

<sup>4</sup> “Relevant hit” here means hits where the article was actually discussing the topics in detail, not only mentioned or referred to it, or did contain only one of the key words.

observers sympathizing with one reprimanded. Also, these negative feelings can later throw new light on other observations or memories by the person. Though these subjective feelings should not be invalidated, the researcher also needs to unearth the facts and figures and the motives of the actors. With such hot topics, it is a considerable challenge for the investigator. A person reporting such incidents may even change his viewpoint, as will be mentioned in this essay later, regarding the case of the *Going Clear* movie. Thus, it is complicated and uncertain to draw general conclusions from such reports – notwithstanding that the content of these testimonies may or may not be accurate to a greater or lesser degree.

The “hottest” topics of these allegations in the academic literature were about physical abuse of the members of the Church’s religious order, the so-called Sea Org Organization when they had to serve in a “disciplinary program for Sea Org members called Rehabilitation Project Force RPF” (Urban, 2017: 30). There is also a mention of forced abortion, again by similar sources of information (Cusack, 2016). In her writings, Carole Cusack also mentions that these allegations remained as the jurisdictional confirmation of the incident was not possible since the court would have had to entangle in discussing Church doctrines which would be against the First Amendment of the US Constitution (2016: 25). This, however, keeps the question open whether there were any recommendations from the Church officials to carry out an abortion as stated by the ex-members or not.

A similar trend could be observed in the press and other media. The statements are allegations expressed mainly by the ex-members or defectors from Scientology or its ecclesiastical echelons. Again, as far as jurisdictional decisions are concerned, no cases with a factual conclusion of physical violence were found with documented evidence. Therefore, it is difficult for scholars to reach established conclusions as they lack the means to “investigate” such issues beyond a reasonable doubt.

Currently, the reports attempted to connect David Miscavige, Chairman of the Board of Religious Technology Center, who is the current ecclesiastical leader of the Scientology religion (<https://davidmiscavige.org>), with personal assaults on former officials of the Church’s international management and other staff members. This narrative flooded the mass media owing mainly to the motion picture *Going Clear* (2015) directed by Alex Gibney, based on the book of Lawrence Wright under the same title, and later by the ex-Scientologist celebrity Leah Remini in her television series *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath* (2016–2019). As will be discussed later in this text, when it comes to Scientology, the scandals based on allegations are likely to receive broader coverage than their outcome, especially if that outcome is favorable for the Church. This is called Front-End/Back-End Disproportionality (Doherty, 2014: 48). As an example, the accusation of sexual abuse against Miscavige in Clearwater was widely covered with dozens of articles in 2019. When the women accusing Miscavige withdrew the charges, only a few media channels published the news. Similarly, one of the most prominent interviewees of the *Going Clear* movie (Mark Rathburn) revealed the circumstances of the filming and turned against his former fellow anti-Scientologists, including Leah Remini, publishing dozens of videos disaffirming their statements (mark rathburn, n.d.). This fact is omitted from the comments of these media pieces.

The Church of Scientology has put a considerable effort to counter these reports not only in its own media, *Freedom Magazine* or *STAND League*, but also special

websites dedicated solely to specific persons (<https://leahreminiaftermath.com>). According to their evaluation, the television program of Leah Remini can be held responsible for violent attacks on Church premises and personnel.

Turning the view towards Scientology reveals that there indeed are instances of physical violence against Scientologists and that a part of the public was possibly instigated by the reports and programs published or broadcasted by the media. Massimo Introvigne, an acclaimed scholar of new religious movements lists such incidents:

That inflammatory language by anti-cultists may cause violent attacks is confirmed by a number of recent cases involving the Church of Scientology. The Church has published documents about several attacks or attempted attacks against its buildings and leaders. In Los Angeles, a man attacked the Scientology headquarters by throwing a hammer through a plate glass window and claiming he wanted to assassinate the Church's leader, David Miscavige. In Austin, Texas, a woman crashed her car into the lobby of the local Church of Scientology. The perpetrators of both crimes claimed they had been persuaded by TV shows, particularly *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath* by actress and former Scientologist Leah Remini, that Scientology is evil and concerned citizens should take the law into their own hands to stop it. Some may doubt the veracity of these incidents, as they have been reported in websites operated by the Church of Scientology itself. However, these websites quote and offer photographic reproductions of police reports and other official documents. Sensationalist anti-cult accounts of Scientology may also have played a role in motivating the actions of a teenager who, on January 3, 2019, entered the premises of the Church of Scientology in Sydney, Australia, to express his dissatisfaction that his mother was participating in Church activities there. While he was being escorted out of the building, he stabbed to death one Scientologist and seriously wounded another. (Introvigne, 2018: 320)

Reading this summary by Introvigne raises the question of whether this can be experienced elsewhere and how the tabloid approach influences public opinion, leading to even fatal incidents.

### **“Sensational Scientology!” by Bernard Doherty in the Context of Hungary**

In 2014, Bernard Doherty published an extensive study on the relation of Scientology and Australian tabloid television. He looks through the history of Scientology's presence in the Australian press and analyses different inquiries initiated by legislatures as well as the change in the media culture. In this paper, the observations of Doherty are tested against the Hungarian tabloid press about Scientology to find out whether there are similarities in this particular social and cultural environment. I will start the analysis with Doherty's disproportionality argument:

*Front-End/Back-End Disproportionality*<sup>5</sup>, whereby initial allegations are given attention while subsequent acquittals or vindications are neglected or ignored, leaving a residual halo of suspicion. (Doherty, 2014: 48)

An example of this phenomenon can be found in the articles about the so-called Verona bus crash (“Verona Bus Crash”, 2017). On the night of January 20–21, 2017, a bus full of Hungarian high-school students was returning from a ski vacation on the A4 highway in Italy near Verona, when it crashed into a bridge pylon and caught fire. Many died or got severely injured in the tragic incident. The tabloid paper *Ripost* published on-line and printed articles claiming that a Scientologist “harassed” the families of the victims trying to collect their personal data or offer dubious services to help them overcome the heartbreak (Szcintológusok zaklatják, 2017). They even named and published the picture of the Scientologist whom the journalist accused of the “harassment”.<sup>6</sup> The Scientologist sued the *Ripost* and its journalist, and the Capitol Court ordered the newspaper to publish a correction because of their false claims (Capitol Court decisions 40.P.21.357/2017/ and 40.P.21.358/2017/4). Since the *Ripost* ignored the court order to correct the falsehoods, a lawsuit about defamation was also initiated and won by the Scientologist, and the newspaper had to pay 1 000 000 Hungarian Forints as punitive damages and the article had to be removed from the news site (Capitol Court decision 7.Pf.20.082/2021/8). The author of those articles was even condemned criminally for libel against the Scientologist (Budapest II. and III. District Court 6.B.1897/2017/12. judgment).

According to Doherty, another approach to the news about Scientology creates so-called “event negativity” legitimizing stereotypes:

*Event negativity.* Titles and taglines can leave viewers with distinct impressions about events portrayed. (Doherty, 2014: 50)

Doherty himself mentions the example of the sad accident of John Travolta’s late son Jett and the allegations of the incident’s connection to Scientology. The Hungarian tabloid media also joined in this line with the headlines “Didn’t Travolta take proper care for his son?”, mentioning that Travolta is a member of the Church and neglected the true nature of his son’s illness (Travolta nem törődött, 2009). Another one from the leading Hungarian tabloid *Blikk*: “Did Travolta sentence his son to death? “ stating that because of Travolta’s faith, he refused to give the medication that could have saved his son (Halálra ítélte fiát Travolta?, 2009). Though the truth about the real cause of the tragedy is hard to find, it is a fact that Travolta was not challenged or found responsible by any official body. According to Doherty, such an event can resonate with target news audiences, particularly if the news use combination of topics “such as celebrity gossip, child protection, consumer protection or tax evasion” (2014: 50).

Another example from the *Ripost* tabloid was when it “revealed” that the Scientologists own the majority of the Hungarian vitamin business

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<sup>6</sup> This article has been removed from *Ripost* website due to the defamation case won by the Scientologist.

(Szcientológusok kezében, 2017). Beyond the sensational title, the article does not reveal the real problem except that two food supplement brands are allegedly owned by Scientologists and that the Church probably benefits from these profits and implies that one of the company owners treated someone who later committed suicide. According to newspaper information, while the size of the Hungarian food supplement market is about 80 Million USD (Profitvesztés jön, 2018), the two brands represent only 5–8% of it, according to the publicly available financial data (“VITAKING” Kft., n.d.; Vitamininvest Kft., n.d.). Despite this, the headline says: “The Hungarian vitamin business is in the hands of Scientologists”, and the article talks about the majority of market share.

Apart from misleading headlines, Doherty discusses another strategy of the tabloid media which leads to an increase in their readership:

*Rarity of an event in the experience of target news consumers.* While stories on tax fraud and child abuse sadly are commonplace, their occurrence in a minority group already stigmatized as a space alien-worshipping, celebrity-stocked cult makes for riveting newsworthiness. (Doherty, 2014: 50)

A rather strange episode of the Hungarian tabloid history of Scientology was when representatives of the Church tried to contact the editorial office of the *Ripost* newspaper to initiate a dialogue between the press office of the Church and the editorial staff of *Ripost*. The reason behind this was that *Ripost* failed to contact the Church for comments about any articles published on matters regarding Scientology. The press office of the Church wanted to clarify whatever misunderstanding there was and establish a communication line for firsthand information about Scientology. After many unanswered letters and e-mails, they visited the editorial office, where they were promised to get an answer to their e-mails. Since there was not any answer again, they again visited the *Ripost* editorial, where one of the directors personally promised to answer the e-mail request for a personal meeting.<sup>7</sup> The answer did not arrive but an article was published with the headline “Scientologists harass Hungarian journalists!”, explaining that the Scientologists probably seek revenge because of the *Ripost* revealing their secrets (Magyar újságírókat zaklatnak, 2017).

Another factor that influences the public image of Scientology in the eyes of a broader public is, according to Doherty, the portrayed dualism between good and evil:

*Conceptual clarity or simplicity with which the event may be portrayed.* New religion reports almost always are framed with a strong dualism between good (victims) and evil (cultists). (Doherty, 2014: 51)

Again, the *Ripost* provides an example of this phenomenon. In 2019, a famous Hungarian pop/rap musician’s drug issues were reaching the press after he crossed with his musician partner because of this problem. He reappeared in the Hungarian

<sup>7</sup> Information from the Director of Public Affairs of the Church of Scientology Central Organization in person, in 2017, when the Director asked the author of this article to escort him to visit the office of the newspaper.

public life after he, according to him, successfully finished a drug rehab program. The *Ripost* stated that the rehab program might be connected to Scientologists (the so-called Narconon program). The *Ripost* published a text with a headline: “We accessed the fake Scientologist rehab: this is how they trapped Curtis”. While in the article the author mentions that the musician committed himself to the program in a radio interview, he was “obviously the victim” of Scientologists (Bejutottunk a szcientológus, 2019).

In his study, Doherty concludes that tabloid televisions play a “paramount role in framing concerns about Scientology in Australia” (2014: 55). As far as Hungary is concerned, it can also be assumed that the activity of the tabloid media facilitated the public concerns about the Church or its parishioners. This assumption is backed by the results of a representative survey conducted in Hungary in February–March 2021 by Ipsos Inc.<sup>8</sup> The survey showed that 87% of the sampled public have heard about Scientology, and 68% stated having some knowledge about Scientology, out of which 86% had negative impressions. The majority named media as the source of information.<sup>9</sup> For those who have heard about Scientology, a scaled question on the depth of their knowledge on the topic was asked, ranging from 1 („don’t know anything about it“) to 5 („deep knowledge from books and personal visit to the Church“). 0% marked 5, 6% marked 4, 27% marked 3, 45% marked 2, while 22% marked 1, the mean average being 2.2. This shows that Scientology is present in the public knowledge (87% heard about it), the majority knows about it from different media sources, their knowledge is rather superficial (2.2 in average on a 1–5 scale) and have majorly negative impressions (86%). Although the role of tabloid media was not explicitly surveyed, a correlation can be assumed.

### An Empty Signifier

In 2011, two Hungarian religious scholars, András Máté-Tóth and Gábor Dániel Nagy, published the only existing Hungarian monography on Scientology titled *Alternative Religion, Scientology in Hungary* (2011). In their book, they dedicate an entire chapter to the analysis of using Scientology as an *empty signifier* and another full chapter to describing the creation of a moral panic about Scientology.

The idea of the *empty signifier* emerged from the discipline of semiotics when the postmodern linguists departed from the idea of the signifier and the signified having to be intimately connected as originally assumed by Saussure (Máté-Tóth & Nagy, 2011: 162). The term *empty signifier* was introduced by Ernesto Laclau (1995), and Máté-Tóth and Nagy define it as follows:

The ‘empty’ or ‘floating’ signifier can be defined as a yet inexistent signified without content or with very uncertain content.<sup>10</sup> (2011: 162)

<sup>8</sup> The survey was done on a representative sample of 1000 people, taken from Hungarian urban citizens of the age 18+ with at least high school education. The survey was administered by Ipsos upon the request of the Church of Scientology Hungary (CoS Hungary). The Ipsos presentation of the survey results were provided by CoS Hungary and readers can access the results by contacting the author directly via email.

<sup>9</sup> The surveyed public respondents who have heard about Scientology had multiple choices to name sources: 54% said Internet news, 38% television, 17% print media, 14% radio.

<sup>10</sup> Author’s translation from the Hungarian original.



The presence of the void about a signified is then utilized to create the signifier, which does not bear a meaning yet thus can be filled with one providing hegemony for its user (Máté-Tóth & Nagy, 2011: 163). Máté-Tóth and Nagy, cite a famous quote from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* to illustrate this phenomenon:

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all.' (Carroll, 1872: 124)

The importance to create hegemony is achieved through the fading of particularities of meanings and constructing such general terms that are impossible to define conceptually clearly (Szkudlarek, 2007: 239). Máté-Tóth and Nagy also elaborated how *empty signifiers* can be applied in the social discourse on religions and explained that when the different social actors are trying to articulate their identity about religion then in that discourse religion becomes an *empty signifier* (Máté-Tóth & Nagy, 2011: 165). They scrutinized different press articles with sentences containing the word "Scientology" (2296 sentences in total) and analyzed the use of the word in the particular context. As the conclusion of that examination, they stated:

We can substantially claim that the press articles about Scientology are in fact not about this organization, as demonstrated by this analysis. The discourse connected to it is mainly rather about that social struggle in which different political groups are trying to define themselves against each other.<sup>11</sup> (Máté-Tóth & Nagy, 2011: 169)

From the above chapters, a picture is drawn that while there is at least no jurisdictional case condemning physical violence by the Church of Scientology or its members (but against them), there is social turbulence created by the (tabloid) media and political groups are using it as an empty signifier. However, then how is violence present in Scientology scripture?

### The Appearance of "Violence" in Scientology Scripture

Scientology scripture is mainly considered to be the books or other publications, lectures and films created by the founder L. Ron Hubbard on the subject of Dianetics<sup>12</sup> (*What Is the Difference*, n.d.) and Scientology. This corpus encompasses by estimation more than half a million written pages, 3000 plus recorded lectures and nearly a hundred films (Westbrook, 2019: 8). Academics studying Scientology facing this voluminous body of materials may conclude that it is better to focus

<sup>11</sup> Author's translation from the Hungarian original.

<sup>12</sup> Per the self-definition of Scientology: "The word Dianetics is derived from the Greek *dia*, meaning 'through', and *nous*, 'mind or soul'. Dianetics is further defined as 'what the soul is doing to the body.' ... "Dianetics is a forerunner and substudy of Scientology."

only on parts or approach Scientology through other aspects like the sociological or anthropological study of followers. Also, these materials have not been published in electronic form, which has left me with the task of diving into the – otherwise very useful and carefully assembled – indexes of the written works and lecture transcripts. I have used the index volumes of three major compilations of Scientology scripture and various books by Hubbard to locate the occurrences of the word “violence” and its hermeneutic context. One of these compilations contain the *Technical Bulletins* Hubbard wrote to train and guide the practitioners of Scientology’s spiritual counseling called “auditing”<sup>13</sup> or “processing” as often referred to. It is more than 10 000 pages of instructions written to the auditors<sup>14</sup> and another nearly 5 000 pages of systematized description of Scientology processes and bulletin series. The other two compilations are called the *Organization Executive Course (OEC)* and the *Management Series*, which is the collection of so-called *Policy Letters* Hubbard issued to instruct on the administration of a Scientology organization and its affairs such as legal questions. This is about 7 000 pages of administrative policy.

In his early writings, Hubbard often uses the words “strength” or “force” to represent physical force or coercion. In his book *Science of Survival*, he outlines life’s spiritual and material dimensions as a duality and introduces a classification of the scale of emotional *tone levels (tone scale)* and how he sees people act or react on different emotional tones in a distinctive aspect of life such as communication with others, treatment of reality, etc. He clearly declares that processing aims to lift a person on the *tone scale* to such desired levels as enthusiasm (Hubbard, 2007b: 529). In the chapter on the method used to treat others, Hubbard mentions that below a certain emotional tone level (antagonism), the person tries to “dominate by physical strength” and states that this is only a mechanism to facilitate social or individual death (Hubbard, 2007b: 184–185). He warns the auditors repeatedly to restrain themselves from using authoritarian attitudes in auditing as it “... will not produce any marked rises on the Tone Scale...” (Hubbard, 2007b: 175).

In his organizational *Policy Letter – A Model Hat*<sup>15</sup> for an Executive issued on September 19, 1958, he states:

People are willing to do their best and will until hammered about it. (...) The only capital an executive has is the *willingness TO WORK*. Preserve it. No person can be driven to labor – as every slave society has found out. When man is whipped, that work he then does still stems from his willingness alone. Anger made it smaller. (Hubbard, 1958b: 2)

In late November 1958, in the *Certainty Magazine*<sup>16</sup>, Hubbard published a short article titled “Violence”. Here Hubbard heavily condemns violence as a tool for social control and also refers to nuclear weapons’ threat. He writes:

<sup>13</sup> Coming from Latin *audire* “to hear or listen” (Westbrook, 2019: 28).

<sup>14</sup> Practitioners of auditing with the same Latin derivation of the word.

<sup>15</sup> A hat means the particular duties or status of a post also in a Scientology organization (Hubbard, 1976: 244).

<sup>16</sup> At that time, it was an official publication of Dianetics and Scientology in the British Isles.

Man's answer in his more barbaric stage was always VIOLENCE.

If you weren't obeyed, use VIOLENCE!

If you were balked, use VIOLENCE!

(...)

But where did all this violence get man? Where did rows of trenches, man for four years filled with uncounted dead, get man? Just where the A-bomb and the H-bomb and the Z-bomb will get him.

Back to barbarism! (Hubbard, 1958a: 1)

When Hubbard started to codify the methods of auditing, he started to release his *Technical Bulletins* which were the most senior issues as far as Scientology or Dianetics processing were concerned (Hubbard, 1976: 265). In a technical bulletin February 28, 1959, titled *Analysis of Cases*, Hubbard explains how violence will not result in a spiritual gain for the one being counselled. He expounds that contrary to hypnotism, which tries to fix the person's attention on something, auditing aims to unfix the person's attention, for example, to raise his ability to change. When he writes about the methods of unfixing attention, he alerts:

Unfixing attention by violence throws a case downscale. As the case goes upscale, the attention refixes on things violence unfixes it from. (Hubbard, 1959: 1)

On February 26, 1970, an issue of *Freedom Magazine*<sup>17</sup> had an article titled "A Cause of Violence" with Hubbard discussing a hypothesis that one of the causes of social violence can be traced back to minorities having a lack of opportunities to discuss their grievances with the government. He writes:

Groups less sane and less stable than the Scientologists, minorities who are not able to handle such situations calmly as the Scientologists have, begin to stockpile weapons and throw stones and have a go at the police. Nobody will listen. They are maligned in Establishment and press. And they can only think in terms of violence.

Unable to express their views publicly or call attention to real abuses and hardships such minorities begin to put their messages in the solid forms of bricks and bullets. (Hubbard, 1970: 4)

One can see an implicit message also to the Scientologist community not to take a chance of violence in such instances. He also mentions:

There's no cool head in the Establishment who has the job of listening and finding out what it's all about and mediating. (Hubbard, 1970: 2)

<sup>17</sup> "The Independent Journal by the Church of Scientology", as printed on the front page of the magazine article.

He suggests that if some kind of human interface could be established for minority groups by the Establishment, maybe violence related to such issues would decrease.

A little more than a year later, he again picks up the subject of violence in his policy letter of July 16, 1971, titled *Violence*. He starts by stating: “The one thing that for sure gets a government or ruling body nowhere is violence”. Then explains that sanity has to be established to be able to administer justice without the use of force. He goes on to give a simple definition of sanity and insanity:

The difference between sanity and insanity is destructiveness. Insanity has to do with motive, not competence.

If you wonder about your own sanity just ask yourself ‘Am I destructive?’

That is the full answer. (...)

Thus violence practiced for its own sake is just insanity. (Hubbard, 1971: 1)

From the above overview and quotes taken following the development of the subject in chronological order – maintaining the possibility that some relevant pieces may remain unearthed – it can be concluded that the intention of L. Ron Hubbard was not to promote violence neither on the level of the individual in Scientology processing nor the people at large in society.

## Conclusion

As mentioned in the abstract of this study, this essay aimed to uncover the connection of Scientology to physical violence. It can be concluded that the topic is discussed in academic literature as well as in the press. Scrutinizing the mass media on the subject showed documented instances of the mass media using Scientology for sensationalism or as an empty signifier, also in connection with violence. Research into the Scientology corpus for references on violence provided insight into L. Ron Hubbard’s views on violence. From these angles, it seems that it is unlikely to expect violent incidents based on the scriptures of Scientology.

While the author intended to execute thorough analysis, there is still plenty of room for further research, for example, to analyze the views of Scientologists on the use of physical violence as this study has not applied sociological or anthropological surveys.

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