

THE SEA ORGANIZATION  
*and its*  
ROLE WITHIN THE  
CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY



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# CONTENTS

I. Qualifications	1
II. The Sea Organization and its Role Within the Church of Scientology	3
A. Religious Orders, East and West	3
i. Buddhist Orders of Monks	3
ii. Christian Monastic Religious Orders	6
B. The Sea Organization	10
C. Communal Life	12
D. Golden Era Productions	13
E. Scientology Video and Audio Materials	15
F. E-Meter	15
III. Sea Organization Discipline In the Context of Comparable Religious Experiences	16
IV. Conclusion	19



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## I. QUALIFICATIONS

I am presently employed as an Adjunct Professor in Religious Studies at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, where I teach courses on “Christianity in the Modern World,” “New Religious Movements in America,” “The North American Religious Experience,” and “Introduction to the World’s Religion.” In addition, I work independently as a writer, editor, lecturer, and consultant in the fields of theology and religion. I am a member in good standing of the American Academy of Religion. A copy of my curriculum vitae is attached hereto.

I received a B.A. in Philosophy in 1962 from Quincy University, Quincy, Illinois; a B. Div. *magna cum laude* in 1966 from the Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and a Ph.D. in Special Religious Studies in 1981 from St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario. My doctoral studies included an investigation of the rise of new religious movements in the United States and abroad after World War II, with reference to their belief systems, lifestyles, leadership, motivation and sincerity, material conditions of existence, and use of religious terminology. As part of my doctoral studies I also studied ancient sectarian movements, such as the Qumran community, Orphism, the mystery religions, and medieval religious orders and sectarian movements. I was a Fulbright Scholar in Philosophy and Ancient Near Eastern Religions at the University of Heidelberg during 1966–67 and a National Defense Foreign Language Fellow (Title VI) in Semitic Languages at the University of Pennsylvania during 1968–69.

In addition to my academic training in religious studies, I have had intensive personal involvement in the religious life as a friar in the Order of Friars Minor, popularly known as the Franciscans. I entered the Preparatory Seminary when I was 12½ years old. At the age of 18 I took the habit and entered the novitiate for a year of prayer, meditation and silence. At the age of 19 in 1958 I took my first, temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. From 1958 to 1962 I studied philosophy and the liberal arts. In 1962 I took final, solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, after which I began my formal study of theology, including the Christian scriptures, systematic theology, ethics, canon law, church history and archeology, etc. The vow of poverty meant that I owned absolutely nothing, not even the clothes on my back. I resided at three different monasteries in Illinois and Ohio and visited many others throughout the Midwest. In 1964 I decided to leave the monastery. I followed all the canonical procedures for a lawful departure and received a dispensation from my vows directly from Pope Paul VI in 1965. I remain a practicing Roman Catholic. As a friar, I experienced a type of religious life setting very similar to what members of the Sea Organization have in terms of study, discipline, and commitment.

Prior to my current position at Washington University, I taught at St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, where I was Graduate Director of the Masters Program in Religion and Education and lectured on “The American Religious Experience” during 1977–79; the University of Toronto, Ontario, where I was Tutor in Comparative Religion during 1976–77; St. John’s College, Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I was Tutor in the Great Books Program from 1970 to 1975; LaSalle College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies and the Anthropology of Religion during 1969–73 (summer sessions); Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies during 1967–68; and Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Massachusetts, where I was Lecturer in Biblical Studies.

Since 1968, I have written as well as lectured about emerging religious movements in North America and elsewhere during the 19th and 20th centuries, including the Great Awakening, Shakerism, Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, New Harmony, the Oneida Community, Brook Farm, the Unification Church, the Hare Krishna movement, and the Church of Scientology. I have lectured frequently on the subject of new religions at colleges, universities, and professional conferences in the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, and the Republic of China. I have also given testimony before the United States Congress, the New York Assembly, and the Ohio, Illinois, and Kansas Legislatures regarding various aspects of those traditional religions and present-day new religions of which I have long-term, firsthand knowledge. In various venues and court cases I have submitted opinions and testimony regarding the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of Christianity (Unification Church), the Church



of Scientology, the Hindu Vaisnavites (Hare Krishna), WICCA, the Bruderhof, the Christian Militia, the Anabaptist Amish, Christian Pre-millennialists, the Rastafarians, and others.

I have studied the Church of Scientology in depth since 1976, including its vast body of scriptures. Through visits to Scientology Churches and centers in Los Angeles; Gilman Hot Springs, California; Clearwater, Florida; St. Louis; Portland, Oregon; Toronto; and Paris, I have familiarized myself with the day-to-day workings of the religion. I have conducted numerous interviews with individual members of the Church of Scientology and have observed Scientologists engaging in the core religious practices of the denomination. I am also familiar with most of the extant literature on Scientology, ranging from works of objective scholarship to journalistic accounts to partisan commentary, both favorable and unfavorable. On the basis of this comprehensive study, and in the light of my academic background and my continuing professional experience, I have formed the opinions expressed below.

## II. THE SEA ORGANIZATION AND ITS ROLE WITHIN THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

I have been asked to comment on the Sea Org(anization) as a religious order within the broader religion of Church of Scientology. Based on my years of research and experience with Scientology, I take it as a given, including for the reasons stated and described below, that the Church of Scientology is a bona fide religion that includes a system of beliefs, religious practices including rituals and codes of behavior, and an identifiable body of believers who subscribe to and are sustained by those beliefs and religious practices.

### A. RELIGIOUS ORDERS, EAST AND WEST

#### i. Buddhist Orders of Monks

Before I can discuss the Sea Org as a religious order, however, it is necessary first to discuss religious orders, East and West, so that we can get a perspective on the nature and function of these religious institutions within religion in general. There are two basic paradigms of religious orders in history. First is the order of monks and nuns (Pali *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*) founded by Gautama Buddha (ca. 563–483 BCE), following his enlightenment or awakening (*bodhi*). Buddha's first community of believers (*sangha*) was composed first of monks only, then nuns and finally lay followers. The purpose of the religious orders then as now is to preserve, protect and foster the teachings of the Buddha and to spread them throughout the world.

The Buddha called his religion the “Discipline of Truth” (Pali *Dhamma Vinaya*) and his monastic rule for men and women is exactly that, a discipline of truth. The chief aim of the Buddhist religion and the central purpose of the religious orders are to take up the quest to obtain releasement (*moksha*) from physical, emotional and spiritual pain for all sentient beings. The Buddha taught the Four Nobles Truths leading to the Noble Eightfold Path. The four truths are (1) all life is conditioned by pain and/or misery (*dukkha*); (2) this suffering is caused by craving (*tanha*), desire for evil things or an inordinate desire for good ones; (3) it is possible to become released from this suffering; and (4) the way to releasement is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path consists in developing and sustaining (1) right knowledge; (2) right attitude or perspective; (3) right speech or truthfulness; (4) right action; (5) right living or occupation; (6) right effort; (7) right mindfulness; and (8) right composure/conduct in all situations. If one follows these Truths and the Eightfold Path, then one can attain the state of *nirvana*, a term hard to translate but includes ideas such as an integrated personhood, peace of mind, bliss, and, ultimately, total release from the cycle of *samsara*, birth and rebirth in time and space.

As with the Western monastic codes, the Buddha developed the rules, protocols, codes of behavior, and punishments on a case by case basis. The first Buddhist Monastic Code, the *Patimokkha*, contained 227 canons or regulations for men and 331 for women. It is contained in the *Vinaya Pitaka* (“Basket of Discipline”), the first of the *Tripitakas* (“Three Baskets”) that constitute the Pali Buddhist Canon of scripture. This code, first developed within the Theravada tradition, later became the model for all subsequent codes in the Mahayana traditions in Tibet, China, Korea and Japan.

Buddhist monks take vows to live a life of austerity and modesty, to chant and to meditate for several hours a day. Specifically they vow to abandon 10 activities that would prevent them from fulfilling the Eightfold Path: (1) killing with intent; (2) stealing; (3) sexual relations; (4) lying; (5) taking intoxicants of any kind; (6) singing, dancing, playing music (in a secular context); (7) using perfume or wearing body ornaments; (8) sitting on thrones or lying on fancy beds; (9) eating after midday (the time varies in other traditions); and (10) handling gold or money. Mahayana Buddhist monks and nuns also take the “vow of the Bodhisattva,” promising out of compassion to save all suffering sentient beings, though they be numberless and the effort to save them would take billions of years.

The strict discipline within the monastery preserves the harmony of the community so that the teachings of the Buddha can be held aloft within and carried authentically to the laity

outside. Likewise there are strict rules of conduct when relating to the laity and general public. Monks and nuns are the standard bearers of the Buddhist religion.

Prior and subsequent to ordination Buddhist monks and nuns undergo intensive training in regard to all aspects of the teaching of the Buddha, the monastic code, as well as psychological, philosophical and metaphysical learning. The last mentioned is especially comprehensive in Tibetan Buddhism. The rules of the monastic life are all encompassing. They govern how and where one is to sleep, which robes to wear and what they are to be made of, the comportment of oneself both within and outside the monastery, what medicines to use and how to administer them, how to seek alms, and what punishments are to be meted out for breaking the rule.

In Theravada Buddhism there are two types of rule infractions. The first, called *parajika* (Pali “defeat”) are serious. They include (1) intentional murder; (2) sexual intercourse; (3) theft; and (4) claiming a higher grade of enlightenment than what one has truly attained. The last injunction shows that monastics have grades of meditation and enlightenment to which they aspire and about which they are obliged to be totally truthful. Nuns have 4 more *parajikas* to avoid, mostly dealing with sexual relations. Should a person engage in these, that person would be “defeated” from the *sangha* permanently and have to wait at least until the next lifetime to resume the path to enlightenment. Thannissaro Bikkhu, *Bhikkhu Patimokkha/The Bhikkhus Code of Discipline*, pp. 2–6.

The second type of infraction is called *sanghadisesa* (Pali “communal offense”). It includes a variety of lesser sexual infractions, falsely accusing fellow monks or nuns, and inciting schism. Under this category the community sits in judgment on the offender and, depending on the case, either imposes a penance for improvement or expels a repeating offender. The procedural regulations are very elaborate. The types of infractions include sexual matters (masturbation; intercourse while under monastic vow; solicitation of personal alms for self or others); building a meditation hut with private donations and without approval of the *sangha*; bearing false witness against a fellow monk or nun; and inciting or supporting a schism within the community. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4, no. 10. There are numerous handbooks and commentaries dealing with all types of infractions and remedies.

There are also procedures and regulations for monks who simply want to depart the religious order while maintaining spiritually harmonious relations with the *sangha*. It is common for young men and women in the Theravada tradition to become monks or nuns for a period of a month or more and then go out and resume their lives in the secular world. The period they

spend in the monastery gives them a “toehold” on releasement and enlightenment for their later lives. They depart from the monastery in a regular and orderly manner that respects the ideals of the religion.

Buddhist monks and nuns live in close and guarded quarters. There are portals for entering and exiting. As with Christian monks and nuns, a member must seek a superior’s permission to leave the monastery and is obliged to report in on returning. As is clear from the Bikkhu’s Code of Discipline, every aspect of the member’s life—dwelling, periods of study and meditation, food, clothing, manner of begging, contact with nuns and lay people, food, medicines, etc.—is closely supervised and monitored. Should a member take flight in untoward circumstances—whether having committed a serious infraction as in paragraphs 14 and 15 above, or simply depart in an unvetted manner—their fellow monks and nuns would seek to bring them back to straighten matters out in a canonical manner. The reason is simple to the believer: to simply “cut and run” would be to expose oneself to the frightful condition of foregoing *moksha* in this lifetime.

Buddhist monasteries accrue income in various ways. Much money comes in through alms. Many derive significant income from funerals and memorials and other rituals in honor of ancestors. Some produce rosaries and other holy objects such as small statues of the Buddha, incense burners, prayer flags, and other sacred utensils for sale to the faithful. Japanese monasteries also produce tea and other products to support their way of life. But almost all monasteries in all the traditions are deeply involved in copying or printing their scriptures for their own use or to be sold to other monastic foundations or to devout outsiders.

What is important, however, is to see that monks and nuns in religious orders see all aspects of their lives as contributing to their mission of obtaining releasement from craving for themselves and preserving the ideal of enlightenment for the laity at large. Even humble tasks—such as weeding the garden, baking bread, sweeping the monastery paths, cleaning the latrines—are understood in a religious way. These ordinary duties contribute to the monastic’s developing attitudes of humility, modesty, and obedience, without which their progress in the stages of meditation leading to enlightenment and the spread of the Buddhist ideal would be impaired or thwarted.

## ii. Christian Monastic Religious Orders

Christian monastic religious orders developed from the religious desire to imitate the life of Jesus Christ. At the end of the 3rd century and later the form of imitation took on a particular ascetic direction. Monks in Upper Egypt sought to imitate Jesus’ sojourn in the desert (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13) during which he fasted, prayed and suffered and overcame

temptations from Satan. The first monks, and nuns associated with them, are called eremites (from the Greek *eremos* “desert”) who lived a life of celibacy, fasting, prayer and meditation in solitary caves, coming together only to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays. St. Anthony of Egypt (ca. 251–356) is the model of the eremitical monk.

In the second phase, monks and nuns in separate monasteries, started to live together. This form of monastic religious orders was called cenobitic (from the Greek *koinos* “common” + *bios* “life”) and describes those who came together to share a common life in imitation both of Jesus with his disciples and of the early Christian church whose members shared all things, including their possessions (Acts 4:32). Soon the communal monks and nuns developed rules that shaped the pattern of their communal life. They gathered in common monasteries under the spiritual supervision of an abbot or abbess. The first known rule was formulated by St. Pachomius of Egypt (ca. 292–348). He was visited by St. Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia (330–379) who adapted Pachomius’s rule for his *Asetikon*, the model rule for Eastern Christianity to this day. Basil’s rule, in turn, became the pattern for the *Rule of St. Benedict*, formulated by St. Benedict of Nursia in Italy (480–547). Benedict’s rule, in turn, became the paradigm for all subsequent rules of religious orders and religious societies in western Christianity. St. Pachomius’ rule is still fully in effect and is observed by the Coptic monks of the White Monastery in Egypt, the oldest in Christendom, and other Coptic monasteries in other countries. The rule of St. Basil is also in full effect in the monasteries of Mt. Athos in Greece and throughout the Eastern Orthodox world. The same holds for the Rule of St. Benedict which is observed directly by Benedictines throughout the world and indirectly by the many Catholic religious orders whose rules were modeled on that of St. Benedict.

There were various types of monastic institutions. Some were segregated by gender. Some include both people of both genders who lived in separate facilities but came together for special feast days and celebrations. Others included wings for monks, nuns and married members. An example of the last is Celtic Christian monasticism, which prevailed in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Brittany until the Synod of Cashel in 1172.

The *Rule of St. Benedict* can be summarized in the phrase *Ora et labora* (“Pray and do physical work!”). The rule requires members to take vows of chastity, obedience (to the abbot or abbess), and (personal) poverty. It covers all aspects of the monastic’s life: clothing, food, sleeping, praying and singing, ordination, offices within the monastery (abbot/abbess; provost; deans, cellarer; etc.); correcting errors and excommunication, etc. These rules are very similar to Buddhist monastic rules. Not all Christians religious orders or societies take the same type of vows, but all commit themselves to rules of prayer, meditation, fasting, and conduct. The

Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits, take the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and also a fourth vow to go anywhere in the world the pope chooses to send them.

Under the heading of *ora* (“Pray!”), Benedictine monks and nuns are required to recite or sing the hours of the Divine Office (Matins, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline) in accord with Psalm 119:164: “Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.” See *Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter 16, p. 31. These prayers are accompanied by periods of meditation on themes from the Bible and spiritual writings. Monks and nuns are also expected to study not only the Bible but other liberal arts and philosophy which will enhance their theological knowledge and devotional life. This type of study parallels Buddhism very closely.

Under the heading of *labora* (“Work!”), monks and nuns engage in both hard physical and mental labors as disciplines conducive to the spiritual life (*Rule*, Chapter 46). In the first rank was the copying, binding and transmitting of texts of the Bible, theological and philosophical writings which aid in understanding and interpreting the Bible, and the *Rule* itself. One of the hand-copied codices of the Septuagint Greek Bible, called *Codex Sinaiticus* (date: ca. 350), was produced in a monastery in the East, probably Caesarea in ancient Palestine, and preserved at the Greek monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. So far as we know, almost all the codices, translations and copies of the Bible had a monastic provenance. Today religious orders keep tight controls over all publications that deal with their rule, theology and other teachings specific to the order. All official religious publications must carry an ecclesiastical *nihil obstat* (“Nothing stands in the way” of the writing to be published) and an *imprimatur* (“It may be printed”) officially granted by the abbot, abbess or other head of the religious order. Similarly all official religious publications as so monitored and controlled either by the bishop of a diocese, or conference of bishops, or the Roman Catholic pope in Rome or the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical patriarch in Istanbul (Constantinople). A celebrated monastic press which prints the religious treatises of the Benedictine order today is St. Meinrad Abbey Press, a subsidiary institution of St. Meinrad Abbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. The St. Meinrad Press, like the presses of other religious orders, employ members of the order, who receive no wages, and outsiders with special expertise, who are paid according to prevailing wage scales.

During the Middle Ages monasteries and nunneries spent endless hours creating illuminated manuscripts of the Bible, massive tapestries showing dramatic biblical scenes, and designs for the sculptures and stained glass windows gracing countless cathedrals from Sicily to England. As examples, one needs only to mention the Book of Kells, now housed in the manuscript collection of Trinity College, Dublin; the Bible Tapestry, showing typological scenes of the

Old Testament pointing to the New Testament, housed in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Scotland; and Chartres Cathedral. To the illiterate commoners of the times these images were, as numerous historians of religious art have described them, the “Bible in Stone, on Parchment, and in Colored Glass.” This type of activity looks like “labor” in the secular meaning of the term, but to the devout monk or nun this was holy work and as fully a part of the *Opus Dei* or “Work of God,” to use the phrase of St. Benedict, as chanting the Divine Office of the Hours, or praying and meditating.

Monastic life included and still includes tending fields, breeding different varieties of animals, running mills on streams and rivers for the benefit of the monastery and surrounding lay farmers, developing new types of ploughs and farm machinery, and making vestments (chasubles, dalmatics, etc.) and sacred vessels (chalices, patens, censers, etc.) for religious ceremonies, and making religious objects such as icons, images, rosaries, and crucifixes. This form of labor was and is seen as integral to the full spiritual life of each monk or nun.

As with the Buddhist monastic codes, the *Rule of St. Benedict* has detailed steps for disciplining and excommunicating or readmitting erring monks and nuns who have fallen away from the rules of the order. *Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapters 23–28, pp. 36–39. The punishments include kneeling with outstretched arms for long periods, silencing, mortification by self-flagellation with a whip or wearing a hairshirt, solitary meals, physical discipline, and, as a last resort, outright expulsion, but care of the soul of the errant one is held uppermost according to the prescriptions found in the New Testament. An excommunicated member is understood to be one who foregoes salvation and risks the fires of an everlasting hell. Members who associate with an excommunicated member without direction of the abbot or abbess are liable to receive the same punishment. *Ibid.* Chapter 26, p. 38. Disciplining takes place during the “chapter,” traditionally held in chapter houses. They are called “chapters” because the sessions supervising the order of the monastery and regulating the conduct of were preceded by the reading of a chapter from the rule of the order. During chapter the monks or nuns settle the affairs of the daily life in the monastery, including the public confession of sins and infractions against the rule. Sinning members are usually sent before special supervisory committees of other monks or nuns who determine what sort of discipline or punishment befits the offense.

As in Buddhism, members of Christian monasteries and religious orders may leave the order in legitimate and harmonious ways. As Roman Catholic monks and friars take solemn, as opposed to regular or temporary vows, they must first obtain what is called a dispensation (from their vows) from the Vatican itself. They maintain their good relation with the official

church provided that they observe proper procedures in exiting, wait until the dispensation is finalized according to canonical regulations, and do not heap scorn on their mother church. If they fail to fulfill these precepts they are liable to censure, interdict (an exclusion from all sacraments such as Marriage, Reconciliation [Confession], the Eucharist and Anointing) and/or excommunication, a total separation from the church and its fellowship.

## B. THE SEA ORGANIZATION

The Sea Organization, or “Sea Org,” of the Church of Scientology had its genesis among the small group of Scientologists who accompanied Scientology’s Founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), on his extended sea voyages beginning in 1967. It was during these voyages that Mr. Hubbard undertook to develop the spiritual advanced Operating Thetan (OT) levels of the auditing process. These deeply dedicated Scientologists who witnessed Mr. Hubbard religious labors formed the Sea Organization by taking vows of service for a billion years in order to signify their commitment to the Church of Scientology and its mission. The billion-year vow of the Sea Organization member parallels almost exactly the Vow of Infinite Compassion of the one who undertakes to become a Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism: “The Bodhisattva resolves: I take upon myself the burden of all suffering ... I must rescue all these [sentient] beings from the stream of Samsara [cycle of rebirth resulting from performing bad deeds]... I am resolved to abide in each state of woe for numberless aeons; and so I will help all beings to freedom, in all states of woe that may be found in any world system whatsoever.” Quoted from Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts through the Ages* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 131. This text conforms to Scientology belief not only terms of cosmology (many universes or galaxies), but also in terms of length of the Sea Organization vow (countless aeons of time) as well as the ultimate spiritual goal (freedom).

This pattern in the history of the Church of Scientology parallels the formation of the first monastic *sangha* around Gautama Buddha, the first monks who followed St. Benedict, and the first Jesuit community that formed around St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). Religious orders take it upon themselves to follow the teachings of their religions in an exemplary way. As the Dominicans and Franciscans state it, they choose the path leading to perfection.

Members of the Sea Organization commit themselves wholeheartedly and eternally to fulfill the Creed of Scientology: to uphold the rights of humans, including their spiritual right to sanity and to affirm the basic goodness of humankind and the overarching goal of survival which is closely connected with the salvation of the spirit. See, *The Creed of Scientology*. The



path to survival is, first, clearing the planet of all engrams, those negative impacts and injuries in people's lives that war against survival, and to raise as many people as possible to their full spiritual potential, a state that Scientologists call Operating Thetan (OT), someone who has mastery over matter, energy, space and time.

The term "survival" within the religion of Scientology is the equivalent, comparative theological idea to what Buddhists call *moksha* or "releasement" and to what Christians call "salvation" or "redemption." To the Scientologists, survival plays out on the levels of the Eight Dynamics: (1) the urge to existence as an individual self; (2) the urge to sex and family; (3) the urge to existence in wider social groups; (4) the urge to existence as humankind itself and not just as a group or nationality; (5) the urge to existence as part of the animal kingdom and not just as a genus or species within nature; (6) the urge to existence as the physical universe (matter, energy, space, and time); (7) the urge to existence as spirit, which Scientologists call Thetan; and (8) the urge to existence as Infinity or God.

Scientologists believe that the only way that survival on all Eight Dynamics is to be achieved is for people on this planet to be rid of engrams so that they can become fully Operating Thetans in the service of saving humankind and the planet itself. The only way for that to happen is for as many people as possible to get training and auditing. Within Scientology the group that dedicates itself spiritually "24/7" to ensure that the key, essential religious goals and processes of Scientology are preserved, protected, continued, published and missionized to the world is the Sea Organization. The Sea Organization is vital to the survival of Scientology as a world religion.

Because the Sea Organization plays such a key theological and ecclesiastical code within the Church of Scientology, members of the Sea Organization subscribe to *The Code of the Sea Org Member* that contains promises and commitments fully in accord with the types of vows taken by Buddhist and Christian monks and nuns. *The Code of a Sea Org Member*. A vow is simply a solemn way of giving a religious promise. Those promises include trying to realize the Eight Dynamics for the greatest good and the greatest number of people; to provide the training and auditing technology as ethically possible within Scientology; to provide the proper leadership to all other Scientologists by the exact use of the training and auditing technologies in Dianetics and Scientology; to exhibit an example of service to others; to show fitting conduct and an elevated work-ethic; to hold fellow Sea Organization members accountable; and, to protect the Sea Organization from false attacks and to persevere. This level of commitment is typical of religious orders throughout history.

Today members of the Sea Organization number more than five thousand (5,000+) worldwide. Because of their special mission within Scientology they supervise training and auditing at all levels and directly minister the upper levels of training and auditing. Members of the Sea Organization, because of their vows to keep and foster the authentic teachings of the Founder, L. Ron Hubbard, hold the key leadership and staff positions in the major Scientology Church divisions, including the Religious Technology Center (RTC) and the Church of Scientology International (CSI).

### C. COMMUNAL LIFE

Members of the Sea Organization share a communal life. They berth together in small groups or as married couples. They share common meals. Together they do training and auditing, the central sacraments of Scientology, to advance up the Bridge to Total Freedom. They study the Scientology scriptures and rules of the Sea Organization together. They hold and attend ceremonial celebrations together. They wear a common uniform. They also take recreation together as a group. All of these type of religious activities Scientology shares with members of religious orders around the world. This spiritual communal life allows the Sea Organization to fulfill its high religious mission, the preservation and transmission of the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard and the careful and exact preservation and delivery of the training and auditing technology.

As is clear from para. 3 above, I myself lived the monastic life for six years. The communal berthings, meals, religious activities of the Sea Organization I observed both in Hollywood in 1998 and at the Scientology International Base at Gilman Hot Springs in 2009 exactly parallel my experience as a Franciscan friar. I had meals in common; studied the Bible, the rule of the order and other theological treatises with my fellow friars at the same time, prayed the Divine Office in common, and wore the traditional habit of the Franciscan order. If the observation may be allowed, the Sea Organization accommodations, while by no means luxurious, were definitely more commodious than those I experienced as a friar.

There is one other thing the Scientology Base at Gilman Hot Springs shared with the monasteries I lived in. Most Christian monasteries were traditionally surrounded by cloistered walls. The term cloister in Latin is *claustrum* and means simply enclosure, a word also derived from the same Latin term. The purpose of these walls was to keep intruders out and to preserve the sanctity of the cloistered religious life within. While I was in the monastery, I needed permission of the religious guardian to go beyond the cloister and had to report in upon my return. Every major aspect of my life was governed by rules of the order and regulations

of the particular monastery I was in, just as described above. To the outsider, it might seem that I lived in a “prison-like” environment, but I had chosen that way of life to seek out my salvation as a friar and I freely accepted the circumstances. There is no doubt that there were psychological and social constraints to stay within. But I could leave, even though that would (and did) mean that I would be on my own with few resources. I chose to leave in an orderly and canonical manner, so my departure was not traumatic; but I also could have “lept over the wall” as others did. In my tour of the International Base at Gilman Hot Springs I observed the exact same type of situation. There are pressures for people not to leave, but if they are so determined they can do so. Just as some might claim the monastic constraints I lived under were “prison-like,” so others might claim rules surrounding Sea Organization members thwart their freedom. But members can and have left the Sea Organization in the same manner that members of Buddhist and Catholic religious orders can and have left their monasteries.

#### D. GOLDEN ERA PRODUCTIONS

Golden Era Productions is located at what Scientologists call the International Base or the Gold Base at Gilman Hot Springs. As the Salvation Army uses land army titles and imagery to describe their combat with social and spiritual evils in society, so Scientology uses nautical terminology, in keeping with L. Ron Hubbard’s experience with the sea as a U.S. naval officer and his conception of the spiritual journey as a voyage across space and time. The center at Gilman is thus a “base.” It houses offices for Religious Technology Center and Church of Scientology International, including Golden Era Productions.

Gold is presently responsible for four types of productions and publicity. First, it produces the films, audio tapes and DVDs used for religious training and auditing and for disseminating the faith of Scientology. Second, Gold houses sophisticated facilities for preserving and restoring the videos and tapes of L. Ron Hubbard, the Founder of Scientology and ultimate Source of all Scientology teaching, for eventual distribution. Third, Gold houses the facilities for translating and reproducing CDs, DVDs, and tapes for Scientology’s missionary work around the world. Fourth, Gold produces other promotional and public service materials for the use of the Church. Gold also houses the facilities for the production of the E-Meters (electro-galvanometers) for use in training and auditing.

All the organizations, productions and activities at Gold described above and observed by me are religious in nature. In fact, they are remarkably similar to the organizations, productions and activities which I participated in or observed when I was a friar.

Religious Technology Center owns all the trademarks to Scientology religious writings, including Dianetics. Its mission is to oversee the faithful and eternal preservation, transmission and application of all Scientology doctrine and practices contained in the written and recorded words of L. Ron Hubbard. Scientology strives to do that as exactly and painstakingly as possible since the Church believes that the survival of the universe on all Eight Dynamics vitally depends upon the precise, correct application of the auditing technology. The mission and function of the Religious Technology Center is vital to the Church of Scientology. The members of the Church sincerely believe that the sane functioning not only of themselves but of all other people on the planet hangs upon this meticulous preservation and application of Scientology training and auditing technology. In this function, the Religious Technology Center parallels exactly the function of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Roman Catholicism. The purpose of that ecclesiastic congregation is to oversee the official publications and teachings of the Catholic Church and to correct and discipline those it deems as heretical or whose teaching is inexact doctrine.

The Religious Technology Center's activities is to guarantee that all forms of auditing are properly delivered and that the standardness of the religious technology, as laid down by Founder L. Ron Hubbard, is faithfully adhered to, insuring that the religious doctrine and practice is maintained in an orthodox manner. The Religious Technology Center in carrying out these functions is an almost exact parallel to the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was directed by Pope Benedict XVI before he was elevated to the papacy. That religious office conducts examinations, testings, and trials of religious writings and practices of Catholic religious, theologians and lay people to maintain that those writings and practices conform to the scripture (the Bible) and tradition of the church, including its creeds, councils, and papal decrees. This is a form of "sec[urity] checking" almost identical to Scientology practice. Neither Roman Catholicism nor Scientology believe that this form of supervision is "policing" or "investigation" in the secular or civil sense of those terms, but the chief means of preserving the orthodoxy of their doctrines and the conformity of their practices to those doctrines. No one questions that all religions of the world have a right to preserve their doctrines and practices and keep them up to an orthodox standard.

This exactness in both Scientology and Roman Catholicism—which often seems "obsessive" to the hostile or indifferent observer—is common to most organized religions of the world. The Latin term *sacer* means something is both "holy" and "dangerous" at the same time. For example, the Ancient Greeks believed that if you did not conduct funeral rituals precisely in the right order, saying the prayers exactly as handed down, and offering just the right sacrifices

in the right manner and sequence, there ensued a serious danger that the soul of the deceased would not cross over to the Isles of the Blessed but wander on this earth perpetually haunting or even harming the living. The Roman Catholic Church publishes what is called *The Roman Ritual* which details precisely how rites and ceremonies are to be conducted. Failure to follow the formula precisely for a ritual—for example, baptizing someone with flowing water while pronouncing the precise formula “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”—can render the rite completely invalid and ineffective. The same criterion holds for how Scientology and Sea Organization members think and act in regard to their training and auditing technology. It must be published and applied in a precisely accurate manner. Otherwise the clearing of a person of an engram or the move up to the next auditing level on the Bridge is ineffective and invalid.

## E. SCIENTOLOGY VIDEO AND AUDIO MATERIALS

The same principle of care and exactitude applies to the video and audio productions. In his lifetime L. Ron Hubbard began the video and audio projects for promoting and delivering the proper technology for Dianetics and Scientology. Today Golden Era Productions is simply fulfilling the mission given to it by the Church’s Founder. The studios, equipment and facilities at Gold serve the original purpose and mission of the Founder.

## F. E-METER

The same principle applies to the production of E-Meters at Gold. To an indifferent outsider the E-Meter appears as an electro-galvanometer for testing electric reactions in the palms. To the Scientologist, the E-Meter is what religions around the world call a sacramental. In Scientology training and auditing are the key sacraments. Objects used in assisting training and auditing—most especially the E-Meter—are sacramentals. The E-Meter is fully comparable to the sacred utensils and vestments used in Roman Catholicism (chasubles, chalices, monstrances, patens, censers, etc.) or in Buddhism (incense burners, hand cymbals, mandalas, diamond Vajra scepters, etc.). To Scientology, the use of the E-Meter is essential to ensure that the technology has been delivered precisely and exactly as L. Ron Hubbard determined in his writings and communications.

To the skeptic, the consecrated bread and wine in the Roman Catholic Eucharist is just chemical wine and bread over which someone said prayers. To the devout Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communicant, that bread and wine are the Body and Blood of their Savior. To the

skeptic, the E-Meter is measuring electrical charges given off by sweat in the palms of the hands. To the devout Scientologist the E-Meter is indicating spiritual states of the soul—whether an engram or other impediment remains or whether the person is free to proceed upward to the next spiritual stage on the Bridge to Freedom.

### III.

## SEA ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPARABLE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

As noted above, many religious traditions have resorted to spiritual disciplines in order to indoctrinate members into the higher stages of spiritual life or to correct the erring believer. Those disciplines historically have included such procedures as ecclesiastical inquiries, formal admonitions, judicial decisions, penances (prayer, fasting, silence, seclusion, physical labor, etc.), suspension, dismissals, and, as a last resort, expulsion and excommunication. Like most other religions the Church of Scientology has procedures for handling errant members. The procedures are contained in the various Policy Letters and Flag Orders issued by L. Ron Hubbard.

As a scholar of religions around the world I can attest that the methods of discipline in the Sea Org are standard and unexceptional religious practices. I can also attest that I myself experienced many similar disciplines when I was a member of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) from 1958–64. The main forms of discipline deserve specific comment.

Communications by Sea Org members with the outside society are far more extensive than those permitted under the rules of cloister practiced by many Christian religious orders and by Buddhist monks in Japan and elsewhere. Discalced Carmelites, for example, are forbidden all contact with the outside world after they freely enter the order. When I went through novitiate (the first year entry) in the Order of Friars Minor I had minimal contact with the outside world and that only with explicit permission of my novice master. At times when members of religious orders go on spiritual retreats they are secluded from worldly contact. Religious orders of nuns such as the Poor Clares severely restrict access to the member of the order even by family members, who are allowed to visit only three or four times a year and whose visits are limited to two hours at the most. Cloistered nuns can have no direct physical contact with family members and must speak with them through obscuring screens. Furthermore, Catholic errant members of religious orders and of the clergy, including those who fall prey to alcohol and drugs, are sent into *retiro*, or rehabilitative seclusion, until such time as they

are healed and can resume their duties. To the extent that Sea Org members undergo limited seclusion from the world during a rehabilitative period accords with general religious practice throughout the world.

The rules of all Christian religious orders require that the monks, friars, brothers and nuns take vows of obedience, and a spiritual demeanor of humility is central to that vow. In order to practice humility, members of religious orders are frequently required to perform lowly tasks and physical labor that would appear demeaning and degrading to outsiders. As a Franciscan friar in training to become a priest, I cleaned latrines, peeled potatoes, hoed the garden, pulled weeds from sidewalk cracks, washed and folded laundry, and swept corridors. One can find exhortations to humility in the Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7. The Benedictine spiritual motto is *Ora et labora* (“Pray and do physical labor!”) and that includes the most humble tasks equally for the lowliest of novices to the most exalted of abbots. In Japanese Zen Buddhist monasteries those who aspire to *satori* (enlightenment) are often required by their spiritual masters to perform repetitive and seemingly utterly meaningless tasks, such as sweeping a spotlessly clean floor over and over again. The fact that members of the Sea Org, who take vows of service for a billion years, may be required to perform physical labor and menial and even humbling tasks, particularly as part of a period of rehabilitation or discipline, comes as no surprise to any scholar of religion.

Those in the monastic life, like the Cistercians and Trappists, often keep late night vigils, sleeping as little as three or four hours a night. During these vigils, the monks do ritual chanting and silent meditation. I lived this way for six years as a friar. During my novitiate year, I rose during the night at 12:30 A.M., chanted psalms for one hour, meditated for another hour, returned to bed, and rose for prayer again at 7:30 A.M. for more chanting and morning Mass. It is standard practice for Trappists to rise at 3:15 A.M. communal prayer and meditation. Many monks and nuns undertake even painful disciplines such as flagellation of the body on Fridays in commemoration of the flagellation of Jesus before his crucifixion. Eastern yogis even go to the extent of piercing the body with nails to demonstrate the mastery of the spirit over matter. Besides these spiritual disciplines, the practices of the Church of Scientology pale in comparison.

Members of different religious orders are often “locked in” at night and put under “surveillance” without being “imprisoned”. Monasteries and nunneries in the United States and throughout the world are locked at night. Cloistered sections in nunneries of the Discalced Carmelites and Poor Clares are even sealed off by secondary gates and barriers. When novices undergo training

and when errant monks and nuns are placed under restriction, they are closely supervised, kept under constant surveillance and even restricted to certain parts of the monastery itself. I experienced firsthand restriction and surveillance. The aim of restriction is to cut off the religious person from the distractions of the world so that they may attain spiritual light or reform errant ways.

As noted above, Scientology is not alone in seeking to excommunicate members who are unwilling to undergo the examinations, and ecclesiastical trials and procedures, and disciplines to regain full standing as a Church member. The Roman Catholic Church has a similar set of procedures for schismatic, heretical or otherwise aberrant members which are codified in the Code of Canon Law. Many Pietist Brethren churches such as the Amish and the Old Order Mennonites practice a form of ecclesiastical excommunication called “banning” or “shunning”. Excommunicates are completely cut off from the faith community and members are not allowed even to have business dealings with the shunned party. Furthermore, a spouse is prohibited from cohabiting with a banned partner.

In Scientology, Sea Org members, because of their greater commitment to the aims and goals of the religion, have historically been expected to live a more abstemious life than ordinary members. Some Christian religious orders, generally known as “monks” like the Benedictines and Cistercians, take vows of personal poverty, while the monastery may own buildings for prayer, study and worship and lands for tilling. Other religious orders, generally known as “friars” such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, take vows of absolute poverty, that is, they are not allowed to own anything as individuals or as a group in imitation of Jesus who possessed nothing. Friars have only the use of property; the real owner is the papacy. A Trappist monk lives in a bare cell, sleeps on a straw mattress with bare boards underneath, and possesses two habits and a set of work clothes. When I was a friar I performed many useful tasks, including teaching philosophy, working as a librarian, running a print shop, and doing outside buying for the friary. For this labor I received absolutely no wages other than room and board and the habit on my back. I had no money to go to movies, to shop outside for personal things, or to eat out on occasion. When I left the friary after six years I was given the sum of \$500.00, a plane ticket and a suit. Compared to the practices of many other religious orders, the lifestyle and monetary arrangements in the Church of Scientology are, if anything, generous.

The fact of conflict between converts and their natal families and even first spouses is as old as religion itself. It was Jesus himself who said: “For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother” (Matthew 10:35); and “Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than



me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). The cost of discipleship can be very high. Both St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas, two of the most significant figures and saints in Catholicism, were kidnapped by their families, who tried to force them out of their way of life in their respective mendicant (“beggar”) orders. Separation from family is a normal practice in monastic life both for men and for women. Trappists, Carmelites, and Cistercians sometimes sever all ties with the outside world, including phone calls, mail, and visits. Hermits on Mt. Athos in Greece live in complete solitude and often do not even associate with fellow monks and hermits. When I was a Franciscan and doing my novitiate year, I could not speak with anyone outside the friary walls without explicit permission, I could receive one letter a month from my parents only, my mail was subject to perusal by the novice master and I was not allowed to attend the funeral of my grandfather. In First Corinthians 7:15, the Apostle Paul recommends that a converted woman be allowed to divorce and remarry in the faith if her first husband remains hostile to the faith. As noted above in para. 28, the Rule of St. Benedict threatens excommunication to any brother who associates with another excommunicated monk without the approval of the abbot lest such contact contaminate the brother’s spiritual life. The Old Order Mennonites and Amish require a spouse to shun the other if the latter has been put under the ban. Siddhartha Gautama (ca. 563–483 B.C.E.), known to us as the Buddha, felt compelled to abandon father and mother, wife and children, and throne and dominion in order to pursue the path of enlightenment as an ascetic. The story of nearly every great conversion in religious history contains a theme of separation from a prior lifestyle and ties to worldly things, including family, that may retard or thwart spiritual progress. In comparison, Sea Org members’ contacts with the outside world are moderate to liberal.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion above should make one thing clear: the communal life and activities of the Sea Organization within the Church of Scientology fully conform to the communal life and activities of traditional religious orders, East and West, in the past and in the present. As in Buddhism and Christianity, the religious order of the Sea Organization serves to exemplarily preserve and promulgate the teachings and technology discovered by L. Ron Hubbard. The goal of the Sea Organization is the spiritual survival not only of its own members and members of the Church of Scientology but also humankind and the universe itself. In that, the Sea Organization is like the religious orders of the major religions of the world.

If a personal observation may be permitted, I would like to comment that when I have visited the Sea Organization berthings, communal life, and activities in Los Angeles and at Gilman

Hot Springs, I repeatedly was reminded of my own days in a Franciscan monastery. I studied, prayed and meditated with the same intensity as I observed Scientologists studying, working and doing auditing. I lived in similar quarters and worked in similar settings, I worked in the monastery book bindery, binding new and rebinding old editions of the Bible and theological treatises. I produced holy cards and publications to advertise the work of the monastery. There was one difference: Scientology and the Sea Organization avail themselves of the latest forms of technology in carrying out their religious mission. We forget that when the monasteries first arose they did the same thing. In availing of this advanced technology the Church of Scientology is simply following the pattern laid down by L. Ron Hubbard himself.

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