

Commentary

Response to John May from a Scientologist

Dear John

We haven't met at all so I should introduce myself. I have been a staff Scientologist since 1984 and from an early stage have worked in the Department of Special Affairs in which position I have had extensive contact with materials from our Church's history as well as personal meetings with members of other religions and groups, contacts with government officers, dialogues with former members of our Church or persons who were hostile to us, and so on. I worked at our UK headquarters at St Hill in Sussex, UK for a year, the US for a year and a half and Japan for 2 1/2 years, as well as several years in Perth, West Australia and again in Sydney. I have been in the thick of interesting confrontations so in the matter of the German government's attitude towards Scientology and some of the comments you made in your letter to Richard Hutch, I can speak with some experience.

I appreciate that while you may have different views on Scientology to mine you expressed a willingness to remain open about the subject. But while you speak from a deep well of experience in religious matters I am afraid that by alluding to the alleged claim by Mr Hubbard about starting a religion, you revealed that your credentials for commenting impartially on Scientology, at least with regard to its founder, are faulty.

That particular claim has in fact been successfully refuted over the past 30 or more years in countless disparate forums. I would be happy to debate this with you further and show you supporting evidence.

In regard to your wished-for substantive assessment of just what Scientology is and does the following passage from the Church's Articles of Incorporation may suffice:

It is the belief of the Church that Scientology is the organisation of the fundamentals of existence into axioms and workable technologies in the tradition of the exact sciences for resolving problems of life and thought and for the freedom of the human spirit.

That he who asks a question is closest to the answer and that every question contains its own answer and further that every problem contains its own solution and that the technologies of Scientology are of such a nature that a person with a question or a problem may be spiritually assisted or guided to the end that the

person is able to answer his own question and resolve his own problems.

Scientology technology is a body of truths and methods of application, developed by L Ron Hubbard from his observation and research, which when correctly applied can reveal the soul of man, extend his knowledge of the Infinite Being to him and make known what is knowable of God.

A copy of this is placed at the entrance of each Church and I could make available a copy should you wish.

That, actually, is the religious truth of Scientology which has been found eminently acceptable to many persons genuinely searching for spiritual insight. Its effectiveness in bringing about personal enlightenment and positive change accounts for its ever-growing popularity. It is noteworthy that the sincerity of Scientologists and their activities is easily verified by direct observation but some German politicians seem reluctant to simply look at what we do because they are so sure of their preconceptions. In their eyes, any preparedness on our account to stand against them and crusade for our rights just reinforces what they already believe.

The passage of religion through the ages has been a turbulent one and new ideas have always met with adverse reactions. People are readily suspicious and resentful of new movements but history has shown that those who were willing to stand for their faith persevered. Clearly, they believed their religion gave purpose and meaning to their lives had something of value to the community.

Scientologists are no different in their intensity of belief and desire to improve things and I think you downplayed the degree of discrimination that is currently deployed against Scientologist in Germany. To be sure, there have been no burnings of martyrs or ears severed but Scientologists there are being thoroughly persecuted in their personal, social, economic and political lives and their courage in proclaiming the issue is more worthy of acknowledgment than dismissal.

Scientologists didn't start a fight with anyone, not even psychiatrists, but from the start were willing to share Mr Hubbard's discoveries and methodologies with everyone. In its history there have been constant attacks, harassment and discrimination from persons who feared a new and different explanation of the human mind and a workable way for man to develop as a spiritual being and attain greater awareness. This sustained campaign of vilification and attacks over a period of more than 30 years is fully documented.

The attacks may not always have been dealt with diplomatically and some, especially in the media, have accused us of being overly litigious. You weren't specific about what you thought were the excesses of Scientology but I can say that over the past 44 years we learned a great deal and have grown up organisationally and corrected mistakes made. We don't pretend to be perfect and for some years now have been very willing to receive questions or valid complaints and to do our best to deal with these. Perhaps we play into the hands of our accusers in Germany by such willingness

to take the fight to them but meekness and tolerance of injustices does not win friends or guarantee survival either.

The best way to test the truth of your perceptions of Scientology or its founder is to visit a Scientology organisation and see for yourself. If you have not already done so, I invite you to contact any Scientology Church or group that you may have time to visit.

Yours sincerely

Henry Bartnik

Church of Scientology, Sydney