

encyclopedia of  
**religion,  
communication,  
and media**

**Daniel A. Stout, Editor**

*Religion and Society*  
A Berkshire Reference Work

2006

**ROUTLEDGE**  
New York London

## Scientology

Communication rules in Scientology are very strict, and a brief overview of them helps to explain a great deal about the organization's interaction with its members and its exchanges with critics. As a concept, communication is a technical term in Scientology, meaning (among other definitions) "the study and practice of interchanging ideas, individual to individual, individual to group, group to individual, and group to group" (Hubbard 1976, 93). It is among the three components of what Scientologists call ARC, which stands for "Affinity, Reality, and Communication, [and] which together equate to understanding" (Hubbard 1976, 27).

### Communication Course

An entry-level Scientology course, which the organization sees as a recruitment tool, is called the Success Through Communication Course. In it participants undergo a series of exercises (called training routines or TRs) ostensibly designed to improve interpersonal communication (Church of Scientology International 1994, 145-197) but which begin patterns of compliance to commands of obedience from higher-ranking Scientologists (Lamont 1986, 40-41). For example, one TR involves giving commands to another in a firm, direct voice, which becomes a component of "hard sell" techniques. Scientologists use these hard-sell techniques when attempting to pressure members into taking courses. As Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) wrote, "Hard sell means insistence that people buy. It means caring about the person and not being reasonable about stops or barriers but caring enough to get him through the stops or barriers to get the service that's going to rehabilitate him" (Hubbard 1991a, 207).

### Publishing Negative Material

As the "hard sell" technique suggests, the practice of communication by Scientology is highly restrictive, with its primary purpose being the furtherance of the

organization's goals. Those goals involve "clearing the planet," which is a Scientology phrase with a dual meaning. On the one hand, it means helping people apply Scientology techniques to their lives in ways that reputedly eliminate their barriers to success. On the other hand, it means eliminating all opposition to, or even disinterest about, Scientology in the world. Toward this twofold end, all Scientology publications only include "theta," which is material and perspectives favorable to Scientology (Hubbard Association of Scientologists 1953). Scientologists who express "en-theta" (negative information) in any circumstances receive harsh punishment (Hubbard 1970).

### "Positioning" its Founder

Scientology communicates its message to members and outsiders through an extensive array of magazines, newsletters, newspapers, advertisements, videos, and numerous marketing strategies (including a hot air balloon and a race car). Important in its image-creation efforts are celebrities who also are Scientologists. Because of the media attention that they generate, many of these celebrity members have official titles within the organization as "LRH [L. Ron Hubbard] Honorary Public Relations Officers." The organization assigns the "Public Relations Officers" to "help make LRH's accomplishments and technology known to the public" through a variety of high-profile activities, including meetings with public officials, media appearances, letters to editors, talk shows, testimonies at government hearings, and others (International Association of Scientologists 1990; Kent 2002).

A particular publication, *Hotline*, provides celebrities with images of Hubbard in relation to "broad general matters of world concern" so that they can attempt to position him favorably in relation to these issues. Once *Hotline's* editors identify those broad general matters, this "positioning" involves designing their communications to celebrities by answering seven questions:

1. How does LRH fit into this?
2. What has LRH done with regard to it?
3. What has LRH produced to resolve it or aid it?
4. What LRH works are the authorities neglecting concerning this?
5. What quotable statement has LRH made about it?
6. What opinion leaders or groups has he befriended or worked with, to bring about a betterment of conditions on the subject?

7. What official recognition or indisputable public recognition has LRH received for his work in this sphere? (Hubbard 1983, 471).

All of Scientology's other official publications reflect similar attention to the way in which they promote and "position" its founder and his goals.

### Discrediting Opponents

Toward opponents, however, Scientology developed communication strategies designed to discredit persons and/or organizations whom the leadership believes are attempting to hinder the group's progress. Scientology identifies these opponents as "Suppressive Persons" or "SPs," because they commit "crimes" against the organization according to its own judicial system. Hubbard felt at war with these critics and opponents, so in 1969 he produced a Policy Letter entitled, "Battle Tactics," in which he argued (in the face of critical attacks) that now "warfare is waged in the press and public in the form of ideas." "A good general," Hubbard claimed, "cuts off enemy communications, funds, connections." These and other tactics in the communication war with critics lead to success: "The prize is 'public opinion' where press is concerned. The only safe public opinion to head for is they love us and are in a frenzy against the enemy, this moans [sic: means] standard wartime propaganda is what one is doing; complete with atrocity, war crimes, trials, the lot" (Hubbard 1969, 2).

When in a battle with opponents, key communications strategies were to "always find or manufacture enough threat against them to cause them to sue for peace.... Don't ever defend. Always attack" (Hubbard 1974, 484). A particular "trick" (as Hubbard called it) that was useful in attacking opponents involved "propaganda by redefinition of words," which was "done by associating different emotions and symbols with the word than were intended" (Hubbard 1991c, 42). Hubbard illustrated how this propaganda technique worked using the profession that he hated: "'Psychiatry' and 'psychiatrist' are easily redefined to mean 'antisocial enemy of the people'" (Hubbard 1991c, 42; see Kent 1998, 148-150).

Redefining words within attacks against enemies was part of "black propaganda," which, according to Hubbard, "is the term used to destroy reputation or public belief in persons, companies, or nations." Used when "seeking to destroy real or fancied enemies," black propaganda "seeks to bring a reputation so low that the person, company or nation is denied any rights whatsoever by 'general agreement.' It is then possible

to destroy the person, company, or nation with a minor attack if the black propaganda itself has not already accomplished this" (Hubbard 1991b, 77). An effective way to destroy opponents is to "dead agent" them, which involves disproving (supposedly) false statements with documents or other solid proofs, which will have the effect of discrediting those opponents by ruining their credibility (Hubbard 1991b, 82).

### Contradictions

Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, paid careful attention to issues about communication, attempting to advance his agenda for the organization that he created. Always mindful of his own image, he developed communication strategies that presented positive images of himself and the group to its members, and mobilized celebrity members to propagate public relations material. At the same time, he responded harshly and aggressively toward critics, devising communication strategies that intended to silence them and destroy their credibility. While many of Hubbard's writings regarding communications are decades old, they still direct the basic policies of the organization. Scientology's official creed states "that all men have inalienable rights to think freely, to talk freely, to write freely their own opinions and to counter or utter or write upon the opinions of others" (Church of Scientology International 1992, 579), but the communications restrictions on its own members belie these claims.

STEPHEN A. KENT

See also Free Speech

### Further Reading

- Church of Scientology International. (1992). *What is Scientology?* Los Angeles: Bridge Publications.
- Church of Scientology International. (1994). *The Scientology handbook*. Los Angeles: Bridge Publications.
- Hubbard Association of Scientologists. (1953). Editorial. *Journal of the Hubbard Association of Scientologists, Inc.*, 2.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1969). Battle tactics. *Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter* (16 February).
- Hubbard, L. R. (1970). Entheta letters and the dead file, handling of. *Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter* (7 June 1965). *The Organization Executive Course* (Vol. 1, pp. 415-421). Copenhagen, Denmark: Scientology Publications Organization.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1974). Dept of govt affairs. *Hubbard Communications Policy Letter* (15 August 1960). *The Organization Executive Course* (Vol. 7, pp. 483-485). Los Angeles: Church of Scientology of California.

- Hubbard, L. R. (1976). *Modern management technology defined*. Copenhagen, Denmark: New Era Publications.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1983). "Hotline," policy of. *Hubbard Communication Policy Letter* (25 September 1979). *The Management Series* (Vol. 2, pp. 470-473). Los Angeles: Bridge Publications.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1991a). Copywriting. *Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter* (26 September 1979). *The Management Series* (Vol. 3, pp. 204-207). Los Angeles: Bridge Publications.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1991b). How to handle black propaganda. *Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter* (21 November 1972). *The Management Series* (Vol. 3, pp. 77-88). Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, Inc.
- Hubbard, L. R. (1991c). Propaganda by redefinition of words. *Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter* (5 October 1971). *The Management Series* (Vol. 3, pp. 42-44). Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, Inc.
- International Association of Scientologists. (1990). *What to do*. [Pamphlet].
- Kent, S. A. (1998). The globalization of Scientology: Influence, control and opposition in transnational markets. *Religion*, 29, 147-169.
- Kent, S. A. (2002). Hollywood's celebrity-lobbyists and the Clinton administration's American foreign policy toward German Scientology. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 1. Retrieved on October 10, 2002 from <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/scientologyprint.html>
- Lamont, S. (1986). *Religion inc.: The church of Scientology*. London: Harrap.