

= The Road to Total Freedom =

The Road to Total Freedom : A Sociological Analysis of Scientology is a non-fiction book about Scientology by sociologist Roy Wallis . Originally published in 1976 by Heinemann , it was republished in 1977 by Columbia University Press . The original manuscript was the product of Wallis 's doctoral research at Oxford under the tutelage of Bryan Wilson . Wallis , after a review of the original manuscript by Scientology leaders , made edits to about 100 passages before publication .

In the book , Wallis first analyzes the degree to which the Church of Scientology views itself as legitimate , as well as to what degree external society regarded the organization as " respectable " or " deviant " . Furthermore , he provides a contextual history of the organization , including a discussion of the Dianetics movement founded by L. Ron Hubbard . Next , Wallis discusses the appeal of the Scientology practice of Auditing , and compares this to abreaction therapy . And finally , he examines how Scientology shifted from a cult to a sect in structure , and analyzes the authoritarian nature of the management of the organization .

While Wallis was researching the book , the Guardian 's Office , Scientology 's intelligence agency , investigated him . They assigned an individual as an undercover agent who pretended to be a student at Stirling University , where he was teaching . The agent inquired if Wallis was involved with illegal drugs . Wallis later discovered forged letters purportedly sent by him and designed to implicate him in controversial acts . Wallis assumed this was a reaction by the Guardian 's Office to The Road to Total Freedom .

The Road to Total Freedom received generally positive reception in book reviews and media coverage . The Encyclopedia of Religion and Society acknowledged Wallis " displayed characteristic skill " in bringing a large amount of information together in an analysis of Scientology . Similarly , Choice : Current Reviews for Academic Libraries described the author 's research as " substantively important " , and Library Journal called it " a sociological analysis for the serious student , with all the appropriate scholarly apparatus " .

= = Research = =

Wallis completed his doctoral studies under Bryan Wilson at the University of Oxford . The author 's research into new religious movements began in the 1970s with study of the Church of Scientology . He had performed research on the subject of Scientology for his doctoral thesis ; this was later printed as The Road to Total Freedom in 1976 . Wallis ' study of Scientology also led to an article by Wallis in the Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain .

The research began with an attempt at participant observation : Wallis enrolled at a " Communications Course " in Scientology 's facility at Saint Hill Manor , but left after two days because he was not willing to lie about his reaction to the course content . To collect further data , Wallis circulated a survey by post and reviewed Scientology 's extensive published material . He also interviewed current and former members , including Helen Parsons Smith , a former sister-in-law of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard .

After Wallis had finished the initial manuscript for The Road to Total Freedom , he provided representatives of Scientology leadership with a copy . Wallis negotiated with the Scientology leaders , and it was agreed upon that certain sections of the book would be edited . In total , approximately 100 sections of the book were edited due to input from Scientology leaders . This fact was not made public at the time of the book 's publication .

= = Content = =

In the book , Wallis brings together a significant amount of information and presents an analysis of the church-sect structure which simultaneously exhibited a denomination-cult pattern . The book presents a critical analysis of Scientology . Wallis introduces an argument that individuals were intrigued by the Church of Scientology for two reasons : the level with which the organization

viewed itself as a sincere structure , and the degree to which the external society saw Scientology as " respectable " as opposed to " deviant " in nature .

The Road to Total Freedom begins with a history of Scientology , then explores it within a context of a belief system , organizational structure , and form of social control . Wallis then describes how Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard " asserted the originality of the entire theory and practice and acknowledges having been influenced only in a most general way by other writers " . He next compares the Scientology practice of Auditing to that of abreaction therapy ? a process where repressed memories are unearthed , usually through hypnosis , to aid improving the mental well @-@ being of a patient .

The author goes on to explain how individuals were attracted to Dianetics , the precursor to Scientology . Wallis notes , " [Dianetics] offered a rationale for failure in social mobility and in social interaction . It provided an explanation in terms of traumatic incidents in which the individual had been unwittingly involved , and thereby relieved him of responsibility for his failure . " Scientologists who participated in a questionnaire for Wallis ' research identified areas of their life that they hoped Scientology would improve , including : loneliness , financial difficulties , marital issues , other interpersonal relationships , psychological problems , and physical illness . Wallis describes Hubbard 's thought process to turn his methodology of Dianetics into a religion , noting , " Hubbard 's theory and techniques had been moving increasingly in this direction " . Wallis notes how Scientology became a focus for those previously involved in the Dianetics movement . Wallis points out that Hubbard instructed members of Scientology not to immediately tell new followers about methodologies that might be less familiar to some , such as belief in the existence of prior lives .

Wallis then continues his argument regarding the transitional period the organization underwent , and describes how Scientology has transformed from a cult to a sect , and explains patterns of membership and leaving the group . He delves into the structure of authoritarian managerial control of the organization , which is seen to have developed as a result of perceived problems in society . He characterizes the " Org " management system in Scientology as " an elaborate and imposing bureaucratic structure " . Wallis describes a process referred to as " deviance amplification " , and analyzes how individuals maintain perceptions of reality within a deviant belief system . He notes that individual believers in Scientology methodologies are kept within the organization by management techniques which shield members from external society . Wallis posits that exposure of members of the Church of Scientology to a reality external to the organization presents " a major challenge to the legitimacy or validity of their definition of reality " .

Unusually for a sociological study , the book features a rebuttal from a believing member of the organisation ; a fellow sociologist called J. L. Simmons . He criticises many of Wallis ' procedures and conclusions , saying that these alleged errors are " indicative of either a decline in scholastic method or are deliberate and malicious . " Simmons invites the reader to compare The Road to Total Freedom against Hubbard 's Dianetics : The Modern Science of Mental Health , asking which is more " alive and hopeful and scientifically objective " .

= = Scientology 's response = =

Author Stewart Lamont writes in Religion Inc. that while Wallis was researching the book , individuals from the Scientology intelligence agency called the Guardian 's Office investigated the author . Alan E. Aldridge notes in his book Religion in the Contemporary World : A Sociological Introduction , " Roy Wallis gave graphic accounts of attempts by members of the Church of Scientology to discredit him personally and professionally , and to subvert or suppress his research findings . "

An undercover agent for Scientology went to Stirling University , where Wallis was a teacher . The individual pretended to be a student , and asked Wallis if he was involved with illegal drugs . Wallis recognized the individual from the Scientology facility Saint Hill Manor , and the agent switched his cover and then asserted that he was actually a defector from Scientology . In a 1977 article in Doing Sociological Research titled " The Moral Career of a Research Project " , Wallis details what occurred after this incident , " In the weeks following his visit a number of forged letters came to light

, some of which were supposedly written by me . These letters sent to my university employers , colleagues and others , implicated me in a variety of acts from a homosexual love affair to spying for the drug squad . Because I had few enemies and because this attention followed so closely upon the receipt of my paper by the Church of Scientology organization , it did not seem too difficult to infer the source of these attempts to inconvenience me . " According to Lamont , as of the publication of Religion Inc. in 1986 , " the book is now accepted by the Public Affairs office of the Church of Scientology as reasonable and fair " , and he was provided a copy of the book from the organization itself .

= = Reception = =

In his book The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism : Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society , Wallis ' former mentor Bryan R. Wilson described The Road to Total Freedom as " A thorough study of the early development and organization of Scientology " . The Encyclopedia of Religion and Society noted that Wallis " displayed characteristic skill in assimilating and simplifying a large amount of diverse material into a parsimonious reworking of the classic church @-@ sect typology " . Writing in The Future of Religion : Secularization , Revival and Cult Formation , authors Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge characterized the book as " the first major scholarly study of Scientology " .

A review in Religious Studies describes the book as " a convenient and in many respects convincing account of the history of Scientology . " However , it comments that Wallis " does not really succeed in the formidable task of giving the reader a rounded picture of what it is like to be a believing member of the Org [anisation] . His analysis , like its subject matter , is rather mechanical and follows a particular pattern . " The review observes that Wallis did not explore the parallels between Dianetics and B. F. Skinner 's psychological theories , nor between the screening processes used in Scientology and in Communist China . It recommends that the book would have been more interesting if it had compared its subject with initiation rites , including those of Freemasonry . It dismisses as " facile " the book 's background material on secularization and religious schisms .

Choice : Current Reviews for Academic Libraries noted of the book 's research , " The study is substantively important and theoretically grounded " . The review noted the book had a " good bibliography " , and concluded that the book be " recommended for academic libraries . " Library Journal compared the book to Scientology by author George Malko , but commented that The Road to Total Freedom is " a much more scholarly , documented work " . Library Journal concluded , " The record ? often a chilling one ? speaks for itself . Not a polemic nor a popular treatment , this is a sociological analysis for the serious student , with all the appropriate scholarly apparatus . "

A review in The Times Literary Supplement commented , " this is a most informative , candid and valuable book " . Writing in Quill , published by the Society of Professional Journalists , Robert Vaughn Young commented , " Perhaps because this is a sociological study of Scientology , this is a cold , calm , academic dissection of the subject and Hubbard . " The California Court of Appeal cited the book as a reference in a decision relating to a criminal defendant who was a member of Scientology . When Wallis died in 1990 , his obituary in The Independent noted that The Road to Total Freedom " still stands as a classic of good field research " .