

# Stoddard Martin, the ‘Babalon Working’, and the Study of Scientology: Recognising a Scholarly Pioneer

Carole M. Cusack<sup>1</sup>

*University of Sydney*

[carole.cusack@sydney.edu.au](mailto:carole.cusack@sydney.edu.au)

## Abstract

Popular authors have typically taken greater risks than scholars writing about Scientology; for example, in the 1980s tell-all biographies of L. Ron Hubbard were published by British journalist Russell Miller (b. 1938) – *Barefaced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* (1987) – and Danish-American journalist Bent Corydon (b. 1942) – *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman* (1987) – co-written with Hubbard’s son Ronald De Wolf. Roy Wallis’ (1945-1990) *The Road to Total Freedom* (1976), the first academic monograph on Scientology only briefly mentioned Hubbard’s controversial 1946 association with rocket scientist and Thelemic occultist Jack Parsons; Harriet Whitehead reproduced and downplayed this reference in *Renunciation and Reformulation: A Study of Conversion in an American Sect* (1987). Popular writers revelled in Hubbard’s occult past; academic treatments of Parsons’ and Hubbard’s ‘Babalon Working’ were, in contrast, brief and noncommittal. Yet, a detailed scholarly account of Hubbard and Parson’s relationship was published in 1989. This article positions literary academic Stoddard ‘Chip’ Martin (b. 1948) as a pioneer in Scientology research and argues that the independence of his sources and his interpretation of both Hubbard and Scientology’s occult elements are of enduring value. Some possible reasons for the neglect of Martin’s work by scholars of religion are proposed.

## Keywords

Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, Jack Parsons, Aleister Crowley, Babalon Working, Stoddard Martin

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## 1. Introduction

The Church of Scientology has been a controversial new religion since its foundation in 1954, and for more than five decades the Church exerted control over the public image of its founder Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (1911-1986) and the doctrine that he taught, through a combination of copyright law, litigation against critics, and appealing to the principles of freedom of religion.<sup>2</sup> Coupled with these legal protections were a range of harassment and intimidation tactics that were experienced by all who investigated Scientology; Hubbard's "Fair Game" principle meant those identified as major threats to the Church could "be harassed, threatened or punished using any and all means possible."<sup>3</sup> These tactics were used on academic and non-academic authors alike: journalist Paulette Cooper's *The Scandal of Scientology* (1971) provoked a campaign of bomb threats, 'phone tapping, reputational slurs, and other persecution which ended only with an out-of-court settlement in 1985.<sup>4</sup> Roy Wallis, author of the first academic book on Scientology, *The Road to Total Freedom* (1976), experienced more minor character slurs, including attempts to taint him with drug use and by accusations of homosexuality.<sup>5</sup> The protection of Hubbard's reputation and that of the Church is vital to Scientologists, for whom Hubbard is a visionary spiritual leader, explorer, artist, scientist, and Renaissance man, whose personal quest and experimental research led him to develop Dianetics, and later Scientology, a gnostic religion for the modern era.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have critiqued the hagiographical nature of this account, and the ways it frames Hubbard as compatible with traditional accounts of old and new religious founders, leaders, and innovators.<sup>7</sup>

Critics have taken issue with the official narrative of Hubbard's life, at least since the 1960s. In Australia, Kevin Anderson, QC's report to the Victorian State Parliament in 1965 painted Hubbard, his activities, and Scientology in entirely negative terms; Scientology, Anderson opined, was "evil" and "expert psychiatric opinion is that the many books, pamphlets, articles, bulletins and the like which bear Hubbard's name indicate in their author symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia of long standing with delusions of grandeur."<sup>8</sup> Yet two decades passed before the first popular critical biographies were published, both in 1987, one year after Hubbard's death: British journalist Russell Miller's *Bare-Faced Messiah*; and Danish-American journalist and former Scientologist Bent Corydon's *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman?* (initially with Ronald De Wolf, the former L. Ron Hubbard Jr, but later reissued as by Corydon alone). Both books discussed Hubbard's 1946 association with John (b. Marvel) Whiteside "Jack" Parsons (1914-1952), a scientist at the California Institute of Technology (CalTech)

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<sup>2</sup> Carole M. Cusack, 'Media Coverage of Scientology in the United States.' In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*, ed. Diane Winston (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 308-318.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh B. Urban, *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 375.

<sup>4</sup> Nicole Ruskell and James R. Lewis, 'News Media, the Internet, and the Church of Scientology'. In *Handbook of Scientology*, ed. James R. Lewis and Kjersti Hellestoy (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 326.

<sup>5</sup> Hugh B. Urban, *The Church of Scientology: The History of a New Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Wagner, 'Charisma, Authority, and Innovation in Scientology's "Golden Age" Narrative'. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 32, no. 1 (2020): 15-28

<sup>7</sup> Dorthe Refslund Christensen, 'Inventing L. Ron Hubbard: On the Construction and Maintenance of the Hagiographic Mythology on Scientology's Founder'. In *Controversial New Religions*, ed. James R. Lewis and Jesper A. Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 227-259.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin Victor Anderson, *Report of the Board of Inquiry into Scientology* (Melbourne: State of Victoria, Australia, 1965), 60. See also Bernard Doherty and James T. Richardson, 'Litigation, liberty, and legitimation: The experience of the Church of Scientology in Australian law'. *St Mark's Review: A Journal of Christian Thought and Opinion* 247, issue 1 (2019), 61-81.

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who was an initiate of the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) and follower of English occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). This story was not new; on 5 October 1969 *The Sunday Times*, a British newspaper, published a detailed article, “SCIENTOLOGY: Revealed for the first time ... The odd beginning of Ron Hubbard’s career.” This piece, by journalist Alexander Mitchell, reported on the Babalon Working, relying on “unpublished letters and a typescript copy of Parsons’ record of the events by ‘a former admirer of Crowley’,” whom Henrik Bogdan identified as Gerald Yorke (1901-1983); Yorke’s personal papers are now in the Warburg Institute in London.<sup>9</sup>

Mitchell supplied dates and times (4-15 January 1946), and solid information about the rituals that Parsons and Hubbard engaged in: “faithfully described in Parsons’ diary as [the] Conjunction of Air, Invocation of Wand, and Consecration of Air Dagger ... the two of them pleaded with the spirits for an ‘elemental mate’ – a girl willing to go through sexual rites to incarnate Babalon in the spirit world.”<sup>10</sup> Parsons wrote to Crowley after he met Hubbard:

About three months ago I met Ron... a writer and explorer of whom I had known for some time... He is a gentleman; he has red hair, green eyes, is honest and intelligent, and we have become great friends. He moved in with me about two months ago, and although Maggy [Sara Northrup's nickname - short for magic] and I are still friendly, she has transferred her sexual affections to Ron. Although Ron has no formal training in magick, he has an extraordinary amount of experience and understanding in the field. From some of his experiences I deduce that he is in direct touch with some higher intelligence, possibly his guardian angel. Ron appears to have some sort of highly developed astral vision... He is the most Thelemic person I have ever met and is in complete accord with our own principles. He is also interested in establishing the New Aeon but for cogent reasons I have not introduced him to the Lodge.<sup>11</sup>

By the time of the Babalon Working Helen Northrup Parsons had divorced Parsons, as he had become sexually involved with her younger sister Sara (1925-1997), usually known as ‘Betty’ (also an O.T.O. initiate). Helen later married Wilfred Smith, the founder of Agape Lodge, and a fellow Thelemite. When Hubbard moved in with Parsons, Sara shifted her affections from Parsons to Hubbard. The Babalon Working that Hubbard and Parsons engaged in was a sex magickal ritual to engender a ‘Moonchild’, what Russell Miller calls a “magical child ‘mightier than all the kings of the earth’, whose birth had been prophesied in [Crowley’s] *The Book of the Law* more than forty years earlier.”<sup>12</sup> Crowley’s novel *Moonchild* (1929) is a useful source for the ideas underpinning the ritual, as is likely his *De Homunculo Epistola*, which Bogdan describes as a “secret document on the making of a homunculus intended for members of the Tenth degree of OTO.”<sup>13</sup> The Babalon Working can be viewed as a failure; no

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<sup>9</sup> Henrik Bogdan, ‘The Babalon Working 1946: L. Ron Hubbard, John Whiteside Parsons, and the Practice of Enochian Magic’. *Numen* 63, no. 1 (2016), 12-32.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Mitchell, ‘SCIENTOLOGY: Revealed for the first time ... The odd beginning of Ron Hubbard’s Career’. *The Sunday Times*, ‘Spectrum’, 5 October (1969), <http://www.lermanet.com/scientologynews/crowley-hubbard-666.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Bent Corydon, *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman?* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1987). Scholars are often scornful about errors of detail that appear in popular treatments of Scientology. In fact, Sara Northrup’s nickname was ‘Betty’ not ‘Maggy’ (from her middle name, Elizabeth), but the text is otherwise accurately reported (the parenthetical information was added by Corydon).

<sup>12</sup> Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* (London: Michael Joseph, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild* (London: The Mandrake Press, 1929). Bogdan, ‘The Babalon Working 1946’, 18. The occult practice of creating a homunculus (a miniature human believed by some to exist in sperm) is associated with the German Swiss alchemist Paracelsus (1493-1541) and is associated with other occult human-

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Moonchild resulted (either as pregnancy resulting from heterosexual sex magick between Parsons and Cameron, or as a homunculus, a 'little man' created by purely occult means), Hubbard and Sara fled with much of Parsons' wealth, and then married bigamously in August 1946 (his first wife Polly divorced Hubbard on grounds of desertion in 1947). Hubbard and Sara's daughter Alexis was born in 1950, and they divorced acrimoniously in June 1951.<sup>14</sup>

In the academic study of Scientology, the Babalon Working is important for three reasons. First, it is unusually well-documented, in that letters and other primary sources survive from both Crowley and Parsons.<sup>15</sup> This is crucial for the second intriguing fact about the Hubbard-Parsons relationship, which is that the Church of Scientology did not – and arguably could not - deny the association, so cast it in a different light.<sup>16</sup> That Hubbard was serious about the occult and a willing, active participant in Thelemic rituals with Parsons is unacceptable to Scientology, so its response to Mitchell's newspaper piece was to confirm the general outlines of the story, but to claim that Hubbard's residence in Parsons' house in Pasadena, CA and involvement in O.T.O. activities was as a special agent working for the United States authorities. This re-framing of the tale appeared in the *Sunday Times* on 28 December 1969:

Hubbard broke up black magic in America: Dr Jack Parsons of Pasadena, California, was America's Number One solid fuel rocket expert. He was involved with the infamous English black magician Aleister Crowley who called himself 'The Beast 666'. Crowley ran an organisation called the Order of Templars Orientalis [sic] over the world which had savage and bestial rites ... L. Ron Hubbard was still an officer of the US Navy, because he was well known as a writer and a philosopher and had friends amongst the physicists, he was sent in to handle the situation, he went to live at the house and investigated the black magic rites and the general situation and found them very bad ... Hubbard's mission was successful far beyond anyone's expectations. The house was torn down. Hubbard rescued a girl they were using. The black magic group was dispersed and destroyed and has never recovered. The physicists included many of the 64 top US scientists who were later declared insecure and dismissed from government service with so much publicity.<sup>17</sup>

The third reason why Hubbard's exposure to Crowley, Parsons, Thelema and the O.T.O. is significant is because popular authors have been confident to assert that Hubbard's occult interests bequeathed a substantial legacy to the doctrines of the Church of Scientology, whereas scholarly commentators have usually dismissed the idea that the state of "Clear," the Bridge to Total Freedom, and other doctrines, ideas, and publications developed by Hubbard after the publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (1950) owe a debt to occultism or esotericism, or have been careful to qualify esotericism as only one of a wide range of sources and inspirations that Hubbard drew upon.<sup>18</sup> There

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like beings, such as the golem. See Amadeo Murase, 'The Homunculus and the Paracelsian *Liber de imaginibus*.' *Ambix* 67, issue 1 (2020): 47-61.

<sup>14</sup> Carole M. Cusack, 'Scientology and Sex: The Second Dynamic, Prenatal Engrams, and the Sea Org'. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20, no. 2 (2016), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Bogdan, 'The Babalon Working 1946', *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh B. Urban, "'The Third Wall of Fire': Scientology and the Study of Religious Secrecy'. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20, no. 4 (2017), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Church of Scientology, 'Scientology: New Light on Crowley'. *The Sunday Times*, 28 December (1969), <http://www.xenu-directory.net/news/library-item.php?iid=321>.

<sup>18</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *The Church of Scientology* (Torino: Elledici/ Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2000), 7-8.

is still no scholarly consensus on this issue; Hugh Urban, for example, has circumspectly documented commonalities between Crowleyan occultism and Scientology, while Massimo Introvigne has been skeptical of the idea that there is indebtedness between Crowley and Hubbard, or parallels and connections between their teachings.

### **2. Popular Accounts of the Babalon Working**

In April 1945 L. Ron Hubbard's health declined due to a duodenal ulcer. For the rest of the year he was exempted from combat duty by the Navy; he spent time as a patient at Oak Knoll Hospital, Oakland California, and was discharged on 5 December 1945.<sup>19</sup> During 1945 he met Jack Parsons. Parsons had been initiated into the Ordo Templi Orientis with his first wife Helen Northrup in 1941 and in June 1942 the couple moved into 1003 Orange Grove, Pasadena, the house that became synonymous with occult activity after Parsons became head of the Agape Lodge in 1943. Hubbard visited 1003 Orange Grove ('The Parsonage') for the first time on 1 August 1945, started an affair with Sara (Betty) Northrup, Parsons' former sister-in-law and lover, and moved in after his discharge from the Navy in December. The relationship of Hubbard and Parsons is of interest to esoteric practitioners, Scientologists, new religions scholars, and students of Western esotericism, among others. To date I have discussed the two newspaper articles from 1969, the two popular scandal-mongering biographies from 1987, and Jon Atack's *A Piece of Blue Sky: Scientology, Dianetics, and L. Ron Hubbard* (1990), the first significant ex-member publication, which took issue with both Hubbard's biography and the religion he founded.

In the 1980s J. Gordon Melton's "Thelemic Magick in America" devoted only half a page to Hubbard and Parsons, and did not mention the Babalon Working at all, noting only that Scientology claimed Hubbard was only acquainted with Parsons as an agent of United States law enforcement, and that Roy Wallis had mentioned the acquaintance "cautious[ly]" in *The Road to Total Freedom* (1976).<sup>20</sup> Harriet Whitehead, author of the almost unknown second monograph on the Church of Scientology, published in 1987 after Hubbard's death (almost two decades after she began her doctoral field research in 1969), mentioned Parsons once, only to downplay his association with Hubbard: "Roy Wallis's research linked Hubbard, for the period just after the war, with a man named Jack Parsons, then a research chemist at the California Institute of Technology and a follower of magician Aliester [sic] Crowley ... Science fiction acquaintances may have been a greater influence."<sup>21</sup> These brief mentions are due to the Church of Scientology's enthusiastic protection of Hubbard's reputation and aforementioned hostility to academic researchers who did not recognise Hubbard's genius and the legitimacy of his new religion.

Popular works on Western esotericism, occult history, Crowley and the Thelemic tradition also have an interest in Parsons and Hubbard. Kenneth Grant wrote a skeletal account of their association in 1972, and Richard Metzger, who celebrated Parsons - the "James Dean of the occult ... one spectacularly cool motherfucker" - produced a more detailed discussion which explained the magickal ritual in plain language:

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<sup>19</sup> Jon Atack, *A Piece of Blue Sky: Scientology, Dianetics, and L. Ron Hubbard* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), 70.

<sup>20</sup> J. Gordon Melton, 'Thelemic Magick in America'. In *Alternatives to American Mainline Churches*, ed. Joseph E. Fichter (New York: Rose of Sharon Press, 1983), 77, 87. See Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 22, 111. Melton's *The Church of Scientology* (2000) referenced Parsons fleetingly, see Footnote 17.

<sup>21</sup> Harriet Whitehead, *Renunciation and Reformulation: A Study of Conversion in an American Sect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 55.

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Parsons jerked off in the name of spiritual advancement whilst Hubbard (referred to as ‘The Scribe’ in the diary of the event) scanned the astral plane for signs and visions ... The operation was formulated to open an inter-dimensional doorway, rolling out the red carpet for the appearance of the goddess Babalon in human form, employing the Enochian Calls (angelic language) of Elizabethan magus John Dee and the attraction of the sex force of the duo’s copulation to this end.<sup>22</sup>

Metzger’s account was used by Hugh B. Urban in his brief, four-page discussion of Parsons in *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (2006), a work which is interesting because one endnote indicates that Urban knows of Stoddard Martin’s *Orthodox Heresy*, yet he does not reference it with regard to the Babalon Working (which he identifies as the O.T.O. VIII degree ritual, masturbation), only noting Martin as providing one of “the few serious treatments of [Aleister] Crowley.”<sup>23</sup>

Parsons, like Hubbard, has attracted popular biographers: John Carter published *Sex and Rockets* (1999) which was reissued in 2004; and George Pendle later released *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons* (2005).<sup>24</sup> Carter provides biographical details for Parsons, a potted history of the Ordo Templi Orientis, a description of the space and rockets program of 1940s America, and a brief background for the Babalon Working concerning Elizabethan magus John Dee’s Enochian calls. In Chapter 5, “The Return to South Orange Grove Ave.: 1942-1945,” Carter details Hubbard’s introduction to Parsons by Lou Goldstone in August 1945, and his interviewees Alva Rogers and Nieson Himmel (both residents of ‘The Parsonage’) set the scene in terms of the relationship complexities that arose between Hubbard, Parsons, and Betty. Chapter 7, “The Babalon Working, Part 1: January-February 1946,” covers the rituals Parsons engaged in from 4 January to 15 January, complete with various hymns and diary entries. Parsons interpreted his meeting Marjorie Cameron (1922-1995) – who became his second wife - on 19 January as the arrival of the ‘Elemental’ mate he sought. She returned briefly to New York on 27 February, and the next day he invoked Babalon in the Mojave Desert, resulting in the revelation of *Liber 49*, often called *The Book of Babalon*.<sup>25</sup> Chapter 8, “The Babalon Working, Part 2: March 1946,” covers the subsequent magickal workings between Parsons and Cameron. Chapter 9, “Parsons’ Final Years: 1946 to 1952,” describes Hubbard and Betty leaving with Parsons’ money in April, and Parsons’ legal action against Hubbard in July, which dissolved the company they had formed, Allied Enterprises, and distributed its assets; Carter asserts that the court mandated that Hubbard pay Parsons’ legal fees.<sup>26</sup>

Pendle’s book is more detailed and carefully written, and more thoroughly referenced than Carter’s, and Parsons’ scientific career is the principal focus. In Chapter 9, “Degrees of Freedom,” the background to Agape Lodge and ‘The Parsonage’ and its inhabitants, is given concisely and intelligibly. Chapter 11, “Rock Bottom,” introduces Hubbard into the mix, and the story of the Babalon Working,

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972); and Richard Metzger, ‘John Whiteside Parsons: Anti-Christ Superstar’. In *Cyberculture Counterconspiracy: A Steamshovel Web Reader*, Volume 2, ed. Kenn Thomas (Escondido, CA: The BookTree, 1999), 112-115.

<sup>23</sup> Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, 288. Stoddard Martin’s *Orthodox Heresy: The Rise of ‘Magic’ as Religion and its Relation to Literature* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1989) has a chapter on Crowley, so Urban’s praise is merited, but it is strange that he does not refer to Martin’s account in his discussion of Hubbard and Parsons.

<sup>24</sup> John Carter, *Sex and Rockets* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2004 [1999]); George Pendle, *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons* (New York and London: Harcourt Inc., 2005).

<sup>25</sup> John Whiteside Parsons, *The Book of Babalon*, 4 January – 4 March (1946), <https://hermetic.com/parsons/the-book-of-babalon>.

<sup>26</sup> Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, Chapter 9, ‘Parsons’ Final Years: 1946 to 1952’ (unpaginated PDF).

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Betty's defection to Hubbard, Parsons' relationship with Cameron, and the collapse of Parsons and Hubbard's friendship is soberly recounted.<sup>27</sup> Pendle goes further than Carter, in that he tracks Hubbard into the 1950s, through the inauguration of Dianetics and the founding of Scientology. Pendle discusses the article about Dianetics Hubbard published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in May 1950, and the bestselling book that was issued a few months later, and draws some interesting connections between Thelema and Scientology:

It is hard to ignore certain similarities between Crowley's Thelema and Hubbard's Scientology. Both religions have as leaders charismatic men with logorrheic tendencies. Both preach that man is an immortal spiritual being, that his capabilities are unlimited, and that his spiritual salvation depends upon his attainment of a 'brotherhood with the universe'. While Thelema was born of the Old World, however, Scientology was distinctly a product of the New. The OTO arose out of the Victorian fascination with mysticism, magic, and the secret societies of Europe. Scientology was a direct product of the twentieth century's childlike trust in scientific knowledge, the success of scientific fantasy, and the Californian desire for self-improvement. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two was in popularity. While Crowley struggled throughout his life to popularize the OTO, the Church of Scientology became hugely successful, and now claims over eight million members in some 3,000 churches spread across fifty-four countries. It is said to make more than \$300 million a year, and Hubbard's numerous writings are central to its success. It is, in short, everything Crowley had wanted the OTO to be.<sup>28</sup>

There is much that is of interest to scholars working on the interrelationships of science fiction and religion, occultism, and technology, in Pendle's fine biography of Parsons; yet many would likely be dismissive of a work by a non-scholar or treat it mainly as a source to be critiqued rather than an analytical treatment of a key event in Hubbard's development.

### **3. Scholarly Interpretations of the Babalon Working, 2011-2019**

I have demonstrated that early scholarly accounts of the association between Parsons and Hubbard were minimal, with Wallis (1976), Melton (1983), and Whitehead (1987) confining themselves to the briefest mention of the friendship between the two men and the events of the Babalon Working. Stoddard Martin's account of Hubbard's emergence from Parsons' circle and founding of Scientology, a chapter in his book *Orthodox Heresy* (1989) appeared only three years after Hubbard's death and is the subject

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<sup>27</sup> Pendle is frank about Hubbard's impact on residents of 'The Parsonage'. "For the most part the housemates were delighted with their new guest's stories and his back-garden heroics, but a few failed to succumb to Hubbard's magnetism. Jack Williamson had heard Hubbard's naval tales before at meetings of the Mañana Literary Society. 'I recall his eyes, the wary, light-blue eyes that I somehow associate with the gunmen of the old West, watching me sharply as he talked as if to see how much I believed', said Williamson. 'Not much'. Nieson Himmel enjoyed pointing out discrepancies in his stories, much to Hubbard's irritation. 'I can't stand phoneys and he was so obviously a phoney. But he was not a dummy. He could charm the shit out of anybody'. Alice Cornog put her feelings more simply: 'I thought he was a bastard, I disliked him thoroughly'. There was no denying, however, that, love him or hate him, believe him or doubt him, Hubbard 'told one hell of a good story'." See Pendle, *Strange Angel*, Chapter 11, 'Rock Bottom' (unpaginated pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Pendle, *Strange Angel*, Chapter 11, 'Rock Bottom' (unpaginated pdf). This passage is quoted approvingly in Hugh B. Urban, 'The Knowing of Knowing: Neo-Gnosticism from the O.T.O. to Scientology.' *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 4 (2019), 111-112.

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of the fourth and final section of this article. Martin studied History at Stanford University (1966-1970) and relocated to the United Kingdom where he completed a PhD in English Language and Literature at University College London (1974-1978).<sup>29</sup> From 1980 to 2004 he taught at several universities (Oxford, Harvard, and Warsaw, most notably); he also established Starhaven Press which is ongoing, and became a popular essayist for *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Quarterly Review*, *The Jewish Chronicle*, among other magazines and journals.<sup>30</sup> The purpose of this third section of the article is to trace the shift from academic studies of Scientology of the cautious 1980s to the more confident, robust publications of the current era. This is acknowledged as a positive development, but the absence of references to Martin's research into Scientology is identified as a curious anomaly.

The publication of the third monograph on Scientology, Hugh B. Urban's *The Church of Scientology: The History of a New Religion* (2011), marked a shift in Scientology's stance toward scholars researching the Church.<sup>31</sup> Since 2008, a stream of high-profile defectors, mostly from the elite Sea Org, have published memoirs of their time in Scientology, with the emphasis having shifted from identifying problems with Hubbard's self-presentation and teachings to critique of the Church's current leader, David Miscavige, and exposés of harsh treatment and human rights violations among members, especially those in the Sea Org.<sup>32</sup> One significant change was the reduction in active hostility toward scholars; it seems that surveillance and harassment of ex-members and whistle-blowers became more common.<sup>33</sup> Certain scholars, including Urban, Bogdan, Massimo Introvigne, and Manon Hedenborg White, have published studies of the Babalon Working and related topics since 2011, some more focused on Hubbard and Scientology, others on Parsons and Crowley. In "The Occult Roots of Scientology" (2012) Urban explains that he will:

critically examine connections between Hubbard's early system of Scientology and the rituals of Parsons and Crowley. By a careful analysis of the available material, ranging from Parsons' and Crowley's correspondence to court testimonies to Hubbard's own direct and indirect references to Crowley's writings, I hope to arrive at a more balanced position on this complex debate. My central argument is that Crowley's work does indeed represent one important influence in Hubbard's complex system—but only one influence, which was mediated through Hubbard's own creative imagination and combined with a vast array of other religious, scientific and literary influences.<sup>34</sup>

As noted above (see fn 22), Urban cited Stoddard Martin's *Orthodox Heresy: The Rise of 'Magic' as Religion and its Relation to Literature in Magia Sexualis* in 2006, though only in reference to Crowley, despite the fact that the book contained an account of the Babalon Working. This omission of Martin's pioneering research into the occult sources of Hubbard's teaching is more problematic in view of the fact that *The Church of Scientology* (2011) does not cite Martin's book, and neither does "The Occult

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<sup>29</sup> Stoddard 'Chip' Martin, LinkedIn (2025), <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/stoddard-chip-martin-810ab651>.

<sup>30</sup> Stoddard Martin, Amazon (2025), <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B0050HJPA4/about>.

<sup>31</sup> Melton's *The Church of Scientology* (2000) counts as a monograph in the era of Cambridge Elements and Oxford Very Short Introductions, but in 2000 its 79 page length precluded that classification.

<sup>32</sup> Carole M. Cusack, "Apostate Memoirs and the Study of Scientology in the Twenty-First Century." *Implicit Religion: Journal for the Critical Study of Religion*, 23, no. 2 (2020), 148-155.

<sup>33</sup> See the treatment of Marty Rathbun and his wife in Louis Theroux's *My Scientology Movie*, directed by John Dower (2015).

<sup>34</sup> Hugh B. Urban, 'The Occult Roots of Scientology: L. Ron Hubbard, Aleister Crowley, and the Origins of a Controversial New Religion.' *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15, no. 3, 91-116.

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Roots of Scientology.”<sup>35</sup> It may be that between 2006 and 2012 Urban mislaid or forgot Martin’s text, but there are other intriguing omissions; for example, Metzger’s description of Parsons – “the James Dean of the occult” – is reproduced without a citation to Metzger in “The Occult Roots of Scientology.” The article is valuable as it offers an examination of a controversial document, the “Affirmations” or the “Admissions,” which emerged during the legal action brought by Scientology against Gerry Armstrong in 1984, a court process intended to retrieve texts he had allegedly removed illegally. The documents were returned to the Church as part of a settlement in 1986, and Scientology did not deny the “Affirmations” and the text known as “Excalibur” were written by Hubbard.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, some documents were read aloud in court and therefore became part of the public record.

The “Affirmations” and the document called “The Blood Ritual” are both discussed by Attack, who argues they manifest the influence of Crowley; the former speaks of the “Guardian Angel,” and the latter is a ritual involving the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Attack went so far as to suggest that Hathor and the Guardian Angel were one and the same; Urban finds this plausible, notes *en passant* Hubbard’s mentions of Crowley as “my good friend” in lectures (which is inaccurate as they never met or corresponded) and concludes that the influence of Crowley may be identified in Scientology. This includes supernatural/and or psychological phenomena such as exteriorizing the thetan (which approximates Crowleyan astral travel) and more conceptual issues:

It is difficult not to see parallels here between Hubbard’s view of the thetan and Crowley’s central teaching that “every man and woman is a star” and that the ultimate goal of magical practice is to realize one’s own godlike ability to “subjugate the whole Universe . . . to his individual Will.”<sup>37</sup>

Urban concludes that Scientology is a “Spiritual, Occultist, Sci-Fi Bricolage,” a determination that would have been a high-risk strategy in 1972, or even 2002, but which, given the free flow of information on the internet, and the role it played in the collapse of copyright law, could safely be expressed in 2012.<sup>38</sup>

The next important contribution to the study of the Babalon Working is Henrik Bogdan’s “The Babalon Working 1946,” which, like Urban, does not refer to Stoddard Martin’s contribution to the study of the interactions between Parsons and Hubbard. Bogdan’s research is valuable as it establishes a detailed time-line for Parsons’ magickal activities, closely following the primary sources. Bogdan also follows the thread of the Enochian magic practices used by the Elizabethan Christian magus John Dee (1527-1608/9) and his scribe Edward Kelley (1555-1597), offering a longer genealogy for the activities of Crowley and Parsons (which impacted Hubbard).<sup>39</sup> His principal references for Parsons are Carter,

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<sup>35</sup> Urban, *The Church of Scientology: The History of a New Religion*,

<sup>36</sup> Urban, ‘The Occult Roots of Scientology’, 100.

<sup>37</sup> Urban, ‘The Occult Roots of Scientology’, 104.

<sup>38</sup> The publication of many Scientology documents online since 2008, as well as the ex-member memoirs, means that many contentious issues in popular sources have been confirmed as fact. Mikael Rothstein noted that, with reference to the Xenu myth, scholars can no longer affect to be ignorant of that material, as “the texts are . . . made available on many different home pages.” See Mikael Rothstein, “His name was Xenu. He used renegades . . .”: Aspects of Scientology’s Founding Myth’. In James R. Lewis (ed.), *Scientology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 368.

<sup>39</sup> Bogdan, ‘The Babalon Working 1946’, *passim*.

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Pendle, a brief chapter by Nicholas Campion, and Spencer Kansa's biography of Cameron, who after Parsons' death became a well-known artist, actress, writer, and occultist.<sup>40</sup>

In 2017 Urban published "'The Third Wall of Fire': Scientology and the Study of Religious Secrecy" and Erik Davis published "Babalon Launching: Jack Parsons, Rocketry, and the 'Method of Science'," both of which engage with the Babalon Working to an extent, while not referencing Martin.<sup>41</sup> Urban's article is interesting as the documentation he uses to investigate Operating Thetan VIII (arguably the final level Hubbard completed before his death) is available via a legal process, the 1990 court case concerning Steven Fishman's allegedly committing fraud to pay for his Scientology training. As Urban notes, "all the OT materials became part of the public court record and, not surprisingly, were ... leaked to the press and posted to the internet."<sup>42</sup> The Church later claimed that the OT VIII text in the Fishman Affidavit (1993) was a forgery. Urban's treatment of secrecy, the Church, and the OT VIII materials is a very fine piece of insightful scholarship. Davis has Parsons as his focus, and the relationship of occultism to science is the key issue investigated. Hubbard is mentioned only fleetingly, characterized as Kelley to Parsons' Dr Dee.<sup>43</sup> Davis' chapter contains much that is interesting about Parsons and Cameron, but does not advance knowledge of Parsons' relationship with Hubbard, or the influence of Thelemic thought and practice on Scientology.

In 2019 two further pieces appeared that deal with the events of the Babalon Working. First is Urban's "The Knowing of Knowing: Neo-Gnosticism, from the O.T.O. to Scientology," which again ignores Martin, but is important because Urban now confidently declares that:

Many elements of the O.T.O. and Crowley's work were later picked up by none other than L. Ron Hubbard, the eclectic founder of Scientology, who also called his new church a "Gnostic religion," since it is the "knowing of knowing," which "knows it knows." Finally, to conclude, I will discuss the ways in which these gnostic and occult elements within Scientology later became a source of embarrassment for the church and were eventually either obscured or denied altogether—in effect, obfuscated by still further layers of secrecy and concealment.<sup>44</sup>

The research area and the outcome reached would have been impossible to pursue in the years prior to 2008, when the protective actions that Scientology habitually took when dealing with critics and scholars alike (harassment, intimidation, legal cases usually based on copyright or patent and trademarking legislation, and so on) were still powerful. Secrecy and the invocation of religious exclusivity are tactics that no longer work effectively, given the internet's open-source ethos and

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<sup>40</sup> Nicholas Campion, 'John Whiteside Parsons.' In Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 320–322; and Spencer Kansa, *Wormwood Star: The Magical Life of Marjorie Cameron* (Oxford: Mandrake Press, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Urban, "'The Third Wall of Fire,'" 16-17. See also Erik Davis, 'Babalon Launching: Jack Parsons, Rocketry, and the "Method of Science".' In Edward Beaver and Randall Styers (eds), *Magic in the Modern World: Strategies of Repression and Legitimization* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 119-151.

<sup>42</sup> Urban, "'The Third Wall of Fire,'" 19-21. It is not clear why Urban dates the Fishman Affidavit to 1980, when the legal case against Fishman began in 1990 and other sources all date the Affidavit to 1993. The content of the OT VIII some enormous claims, such as Hubbard's identity with Maitreya, Lucifer and the Antichrist, and his mission being to prevent the second coming of Jesus.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, 'Babalon Launching: Jack Parsons, Rocketry, and the "Method of Science",' 126-127.

<sup>44</sup> Urban, 'The Knowing of Knowing: Neo-Gnosticism from the O.T.O. to Scientology,' 99.

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facilitation of copying and distribution of materials.<sup>45</sup> Urban's ideas have developed and been strengthened due to this positive change in the research environment.

The second article from 2019 is by Massimo Introvigne and takes a very different stance to that of Urban in the publications of his that I have traced from 2006 to 2019. Introvigne notes that the Church of Scientology positively accepts the designation "gnostic religion" (as being in possession of special or salvific knowledge), but rejects being identified as part of the Western Esoteric tradition (a classification Introvigne attributes to Melton).<sup>46</sup> In his sketch of the Babalon Working, Introvigne places considerable weight on Sara Northrup having become sexually involved with Parsons from the age of thirteen (i.e., in 1938) and this being the reason Parsons was unable to retrieve funds from Hubbard, as he feared being charged with statutory rape.<sup>47</sup> Introvigne argues that sources close to Parsons were responsible for the narrative of Hubbard's engagement with 'The Parsonage', and that it therefore should be at the very least treated with significant scepticism and at the most entirely discarded.

He describes journalist Alexander Mitchell's (b. 1942) life as an Australian radical Trotskyite in London, and contends that the article he published in *The Sunday Times* should be deemed inadmissible despite Mitchell's access to primary source documents, as he was not able to read them accurately (this argument is also directed at Atack's account of the Babalon Working – far less convincingly as Atack is an insider and not an outsider - and privileges an enlightened or gnostic reading over the capacity of an intelligent outsider to draw common sense conclusions when confronted with strange, unfamiliar and possibly scandalous information).<sup>48</sup>

Mitchell did have access to original documents. But, as he did not "speak the language," he read them outside of their context, and looked at Crowleyan magic as simply disgusting and weird. The same is true for professional anti- Scientologists, who learned the story of the Babalon Working from Mitchell and were only too happy to repeat it. John Atack devoted to the incident a whole chapter of his 1990 anti-Scientology summa *A Piece of Blue Sky* (Atack 1990, 89–102).<sup>49</sup>

This is not an uncontroversial position to take, as Introvigne here clearly approves insider accounts and asserts that outsiders are literally incapable of understanding texts and behaviours that are located in a gnostic religious context. This perspective is consistent across his scholarly work, which is generally sceptical of ex-members claiming to have experienced harm or to have been coerced in any way (for example, sexual coercion or forced labour), and is also on occasion dismissive of the perspectives of critical outsiders. Introvigne rather affirms the views of those still part of the movement in question who claim free choice and positive benefits. My own position is different; I follow Jeppe Sinding Jensen's contention that the insider-outsider issue has taken up more space than it merits in religious studies. In fact, it can be reduced to banality; "the plain fact that knowledge is unevenly distributed among subjects."<sup>50</sup> That being acknowledged, both scholars and other outsiders approaching topics that have particular meaning for religionists can nevertheless produce illuminating interpretations. Introvigne hedges his bets when he notes that the Mitchell/ Atack account of Hubbard at 'The

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<sup>45</sup> Cusack, 'Media Coverage of Scientology in the United States,' *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> Massimo Introvigne, 'The Gnostic L. Ron Hubbard: Was He Influenced by Aleister Crowley?' *The Journal of CESNUR* 3, no. 3 (2019), 54.

<sup>47</sup> Introvigne, 'The Gnostic L. Ron Hubbard', 60.

<sup>48</sup> Introvigne, 'The Gnostic L. Ron Hubbard', 64-66.

<sup>49</sup> Introvigne, 'The Gnostic L. Ron Hubbard', 64.

<sup>50</sup> Jeppe Sinding Jensen, Revisiting the Insider-Outsider Debate: Dismantling a Pseudo-problem in the Study of Religion. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 23, no. 1 (2011): 29.

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Parsonage' and the Church's account of the same events are irreconcilable, then invokes Melton's idea "that the two stories are both, from their respective different points of view, genuine perceptions of the same events."<sup>51</sup>

Introvigne also rejects Urban's contention that Scientology owes a debt to Crowley and Thelema. Interestingly, he regards Hubbard's pre-Dianetics fiction writing as a significant source of material about his interest in magic and the research he had done on that topic (the same position as that taken by Harriet Whitehead, who is not referenced, in 1987).<sup>52</sup> Needless to say, Stoddard Martin's work on Scientology, which provides alternate sources to demonstrate that Hubbard was indeed indebted to occultism in general, and Crowley in particular, is not cited. Introvigne also arguably contends that the fact of Scientology being a religion precludes it from being a magical system or indebted to Crowley.

The final academic account of the Babalon Working to be considered here is Chapter 5 in Manon Hedenborg White's *The Eloquent Blood: The Goddess Babalon & the Construction of Femininities in Western Esotericism* (2020), which is a study of Babalon as divine feminine.<sup>53</sup> Hedenborg White mentions Hubbard in passing and engages in a close analysis of Parsons' "Liber 49." Her account of the magickal work between Hubbard and Parsons on 2-3 March 1946 demonstrates the shift in Parsons towards Babalon as a human lover (likely identified with Cameron), and directly connects this new goddess incarnate with Parsons' withdrawal from Crowley and development of the cultic aspects of Babalon worship. Hubbard is very much a marginal figure in this study, and it is unsurprising that Martin does not appear in the references.<sup>54</sup>

### **4. Stoddard Martin's Account of the Babalon Working and its Consequences**

It is possible that at this point readers may not think that a quite obscure book published by a literary academic merits the attention and praise I have signalled as its due.<sup>55</sup> Yet Martin's Chapter 9, "L. R. Hubbard and Scientology," is a detailed and carefully researched study of Hubbard and Scientology which opens with Crowley and treats Hubbard as a magician and innovator who transferred the hierarchies of Western esoteric systems into the new religion of Scientology. Martin has read Corydon and De Wolf, and is aware of the scandals around Hubbard, including bigamy, occult interests, and his perpetual eye to the main chance. He is also well-versed in Theosophy, the Order of the Golden Dawn, the correspondence between Parsons and Crowley, and the countercultural trends of the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Hubbard's biography is revisited, and a brief history of Dianetics and Scientology is sketched.<sup>57</sup> Martin seriously examines texts that Introvigne, for example, would deem inadmissible; for example, Ronald de Wolfe's claim that Crowley is "an intimate, unacknowledged inspiration" in Scientology,<sup>58</sup> and his

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<sup>51</sup> Introvigne, 'The Gnostic L. Ron Hubbard', 67.

<sup>52</sup> Whitehead, *Renunciation and Reformulation: A Study of Conversion in an American Sect*, 55.

<sup>53</sup> Another study focused on Babalon as a goddess or image of the divine feminine, is Gordan Djurdjevic's 'Our Lady Babalon and Her Cup of Fornications: Approaches to a Thelemic Goddess'. *Clavis: Journal of Occult Arts, Letters and Experience* 2 (2013): 55-65.

<sup>54</sup> Manon Hedenborg White, *The Eloquent Blood: The Goddess Babalon and the Construction of Femininities in Western Esotericism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 125-156.

<sup>55</sup> Stoddard Martin published two other books that are of great importance, first to the study of so-called "cult" leaders and second to the Western esoteric tradition. See Stoddard Martin, *Art, Messianism and Crime: A Study of Antinomianism in Modern Literature and Lives* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986) and Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to "The Waste Land": A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1982).

<sup>56</sup> 9 January 2017, "Though I was born in Philadelphia, I grew up in California, amid the counterculture of the later '60s." Email correspondence with Chip Martin.

<sup>57</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 202-208.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 198.

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insistence that Hubbard, his father, drugged him as a child in attempts to transform him into a Moonchild. Martin argues that “Hubbard’s ‘magic’ divides logically into two parts: Dianetics, which has to do with psychological processing; and Scientology proper, the religion of spiritual transcendence.”<sup>59</sup> He notes the Nietzschean “will to survival” encoded in Hubbard’s Eight Dynamics, and posits a possible link with the Golden Dawn’s levels, where there is a break after four between the “inner” and “outer” orders. Martin also argues that Scientology is “entirely Hermetic” (that is, esoteric or Gnostic) in its aim to know God and become transhuman.<sup>60</sup>

Martin is interested in how “‘Becoming clear’ in Scientology means above all becoming enmeshed in highly structured group thinking and development of ‘powers’ in the context of it.”<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the OT VIII level, which was discussed above with reference to Urban, is of great importance. Martin analyses the various stages, hierarchies, levels, and lists that Hubbard developed, and how these mesh with the Manichaean worldview he crafted in both his fiction and his theology.<sup>62</sup> A few small details are clearly incorrect – Sara Northrup was not Parsons’ wife when she and Ron eloped, and Martin says she was, not once but several times – and at times some of Martin’s views are not expressed in the preferred cool, scholarly language, but will strike twenty-first century readers as snippy and even abusive. Yet the picture he paints is compelling, primarily due to the combination of text-based research (published books and unpublished documents) and actual fieldwork among Scientologists whom he knew well and was – in some cases – related to. Martin has consulted Francis King, Kenneth Grant, and John Symonds on Crowley, and is well-informed about publications about Hubbard and Scientology (for example, Roy Wallis, and popular authors Stewart Lamont, Christopher Evans, Omar V. Garrison, Maurice Burrell).<sup>63</sup>

Martin’s primary informant in the Church of Scientology was Julie Beard Gerbode Spickler (daughter of Rodney R. Beard [1911-2005] and Marion Harper Beard [1913-1999]), who was for a time his sister-in-law. Her first husband, Frank A. Gerbode, ran the Palo Alto mission and broke with the Church in 1982, and her second husband, Philip C. Spickler (1931-2020) – she was his third wife – was a Scientology auditor, minister, and missionary who worked with Hubbard in the 1950s, led Scientology missions in Detroit and the San Francisco Bay Area, and was the father of Mimi Rogers (b. Miriam Ann Spickler, 1956), Tom Cruise’s first wife.<sup>64</sup> This constitutes exemplary fieldwork among high-ranking Scientologists who due to close familial relationships, disclosed much. In my conversations with Chip Martin, he gave the following information:

*Scientology*: my knowledge of it comes from having lived in 1970-72 sporadically with my prospective wife’s sister and brother-in-law in a house in old Palo Alto just off the Stanford campus. (My ex-wife and her siblings were children of a Stanford professor of medicine.) They were Scientologists as well as musicians, intellectuals of the time,

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<sup>59</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 208.

<sup>60</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 210.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 213.

<sup>62</sup> Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 221-224.

<sup>63</sup> John Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life and Magick of Aleister Crowley* (London: Macdonald and Co., 1971); Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom* (1976); Christopher Evans, *Cults of Unreason* (St Albans: Granada, 1974); Stewart Lamont, *Religion Inc.: The Church of Scientology* (London: Chamber, 1986); Omar V. Garrison, *The Hidden Story of Scientology* (New York: Citadel Press, 1974); and Maurice Burrell, *Scientology: What It Is and What It Does* (London: Lakeland, 1970). There are omissions; for example, Martin does not reference Russell Miller’s *Barefaced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* (1987) or Paulette Cooper’s *The Scandal of Scientology* (New York: Tower Books, 1971), both of which were available.

<sup>64</sup> Steve Cannane, ‘Scientology and the Kidman-Cruise split’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September (2016), <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/scientology-and-the-kidmancruise-split-20160905-gr928n.html>.

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drug experimenting New Agers. I was busy as a social worker in the E Palo Alto ghetto, cutting and selling firewood on the side. They of course tried to interest me in ‘the church’ but I resisted, as did the rest of my ex-wife’s family. Eventually their marriage broke up; she went off with the head of Scientology in the region, and he (a scion of the Alexander fortune in San Francisco & Hawaii) bought the franchise - an arresting swap. My ex-sister-in-law and her new partner spent time on an L. Ron yacht in the Caribbean as well as at Saint Hill in England and the Scientology Centre in L.A. They were in and out of my life throughout the period until I broke up with my ex-wife in 1980.

*Steinerism*: another of my ex’s siblings and his wife were Anthroposophists, also musicians and ersatz intellectuals of the age, he a professor of German at Sonoma State and latterly Fulbrighter at U of Gottingen. Their rival discipline appealed to me rather more than Scientology, as you might expect, tapping into Hermann Hesse-like roots as it did. Their children all went to Waldorf schools; when my book *California Writers* came out, he organised events for me in Sonoma, Gottingen and Hannover.<sup>65</sup>

Martin and his wife shared a house in Palo Alto with Julie Beard Gerbode and her husband ‘Sarge’ Gerbode in the early 1970s, and he is also well-read in Hubbard’s own writings, both science fiction and Scientology texts. It is my contention that he is an unimpeachable source of information regarding Hubbard and Scientology, with close personal links to high-ranking Church officials who were a source of direct knowledge until 1980 when his divorce ended contact with the family of his then ex-wife. His memory may be faulty in that email quoted above, as *Orthodox Heresy* references conversations with Julie Spickler from 1986, which suggests that Martin’s friendship with her survived his divorce and continued for at least another six years. Moreover, Martin is a trained scholar who produced texts that were recognised as authoritative in his discipline of English Literature, but which were ignored by scholars in Religious Studies and the emergent field of Western Esotericism, despite being of direct relevance and reflecting early field research in the counterculture of California in the 1960s and 1970s that was not otherwise available in publications on the topics of the occult, Scientology and charismatic leaders more generally at that time.

### **5. Conclusion**

This article has argued that the research contained in Stoddard Martin’s *Orthodox Heresy* (1989), on the Church of Scientology in particular, but also on other topics relevant to the study of magic, esotericism, and new religions has been ignored in Religious Studies and Esotericism Studies.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that this is primarily due to the limitations of the idea of a discipline or area of study, which means that works by philosophers, literary scholars, art historians and others representing a range of disciplines are habitually ignored by Religious Studies scholars and those in related fields. I have reviewed the literature on the Babalon Working in this article, and shown that from 1989 – when

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<sup>65</sup> Stoddard ‘Chip’ Martin to Carole Cusack, email communication, 16 April 2017.

<sup>66</sup> My colleague Helen Farley and I attempted to redress the lack of interest in Martin’s work on Scientology by reprinting his chapter in the four-volume series we edited for Routledge. See Carole M. Cusack and Helen Farley (eds), *Religion, the Occult, and the Paranormal*, 4-volume reprint series (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

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Martin's book was published – it was available to new religious movements scholars with an interest in Scientology and was signally ignored.

The most intriguing fact I have uncovered is that Hugh B. Urban, a fine scholar with a distinguished publishing record on Scientology – and who I believe to have reached the correct and defensible position that Scientology is indebted to Crowleyan occultism – knew of Martin's book in 2006, when he was working on a much broader study, *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism*. Yet even at that stage his use of Martin was selective and focused on the chapter on Crowley, which leads me to suspect that he did not own Martin's book but had possibly acquired a photocopy or scan of that one chapter of *Orthodox Heresy* and failed to realise that Martin was of real significance to the research he was engaged with. Whatever the case, I believe it is necessary to honour Martin and to acknowledge that he was ahead of the academic game where Scientology was concerned. I hope in the near future to write several more articles that assess his contribution to the study of new religious movements more broadly and the Western Esoteric tradition.

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