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1

RELIGION OR BUSINESS?

Practices of Scientology Being Investigated Again



YOUNG INITIATES — The Rev. Robert Bobo talks with two children who are taking Scientology courses. The photo on the wall is of the founder of the worldwide group, L. Ron Hubbard.

BY JOHN DART
Times Religion Writer

The mimeographed notice looked more like a secret police communique than a church message.

It informed "those concerned" that a certain 20-year-old girl "is hereby declared a Suppressive Person and assigned a condition of Enemy for the following reason:

"Demanding a refund of money for services rendered."

The menacing note signed by two "ethics officers" went on to say "she has taken herself off the only road to Total Freedom for Mankind."

The communication was from the Church of Scientology of California, a growing organization being tested in the courts as to whether it is primarily a business or a religion.

The state attorney general's office, it has been learned, is investigating the Los Angeles-based church, one of the three Scientology organizations guided by writer L. Ron Hubbard from his yacht cruising the Mediterranean Sea.

Combination of Complaints

The investigation was prompted "by a combination of complaints from members of the public and inquiries by other law enforcement agencies," according to Larry Tapper of the attorney general's charitable trust division. He did not indicate whether any charges would be made.

Arthur Maren, a spokesman for Scientology in the Western states, said there have been investigations many times before, "but it still surprises me when we hear of another."

Scientologists claim they are subjected to unwarranted persecution by the press and by government agencies, especially the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Under a 1963 court order, the FDA has authorized seizure of Scientology's E-meters "anytime we can find them," according to Joshua Zatman, assistant FDA commissioner for education and information in Washington.

Form of Lie Detector

FDA scientists claim the E-meter—a galvanometer with two tin cans attached—is a crude form of lie detector which measures the reactions of skin when a person holding the tin cans is questioned.

The instrument, however, is indispensable to Scientology.

With it, Scientology "auditors" employ a kind of psychoanalysis to bring initiates along alleged levels of self-understanding to the state of "clear." (In recent months, Scientologists have been speaking of "pastoral counselors" instead of "auditors." And those undergoing the analysis are now called "parishioners.")

The steps to "clear" cost anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000, according to Maren. The final steps to clear are administered by the American Saint Hill Organization, 2723 W. Temple St.

If one wants an "understanding of the universe," the cost of courses given by the Advanced Organization, 916 S. Westlake Ave., can run more than \$3,000.

Scientology officials stoutly maintain that anyone dissatisfied will receive prompt refunds.

On the other hand, the 20-year-old Southern California girl who received in her mail the notice labeling her an enemy of Scientology said in an interview she found she could regain the \$812 she spent in three months only with persistence.

The girl, a Harbor College student

Please Turn to Page 2, Col. 1

California Investigates Scientology Practices

Continued from First Page

who asked that her name not be used, said she became interested in Scientology when she read Hubbard's "Dianetics," published in 1950 and containing many of the concepts of what was later called Scientology.

Take Courses

She began taking courses at the Church of Scientology, 2005 W. 9th St., last December, and later started "processing" with an auditor and the E-meter.

"At first I thought it was great and got a lot out of it," she said. "Then a month later I began to feel it hadn't helped."

When she wrote a letter asking for her money back, she was asked by an ethics officer to come to the church building. Claiming it was inconceivable that anyone would not get anything from "processing," an ethics officer persuaded her to take a \$100 review course without charge to find out "who was suppressing her."

Same Old Things

"It seemed like we went back over the same old things," she recalled. "Then I decided the processing was utterly worthless."

Two more trips to the church headquarters and two more attempts to dissuade her, and she eventually received her refund.

The girl, who said nearly everyone she met in Scientology was "friendly and happy," received the suppressive person declaration in the mail several days later.

A newsman questioned a Scientology representative about the incident and within two weeks the representative said the practice was canceled by world headquarters.

"The practice had been under review but the change probably gained velocity because of the inquiry about the case," said the spokesman.

Return to Fold

At one time, Scientologists designated many persons as suppressive, partly as a technique to bring disenchanted Scientologists back into the fold. One official said 60 to 65% would return.



USE OF E-METER — The Rev. Michael Miller demonstrates Scientology's use of E-meter with Rev. Robert Bobo holding tin cans. Scientologists

use device as kind of lie detector in questioning initiates about their past and other problems in what organization calls "pastoral counseling."
Times photos by Fitzgerald Whitney

Cognizant that the terminology and styles of operation have presented a militaristic aura to outsiders, Scientology leaders have instituted reforms over the last 12 months. Discarded have been such things as the practice of "disconnection" — which was to urge a new Scientologist to sever relationships with any objecting family members.

For a while, Advanced Organization members wore white uniforms with white helmets and boots but a spokesman said the garb was abandoned a few months ago. However, a newsman reported talking to several uniformed members recently.

Scientology still has its own "navy," though. Uniformed members of the Organization of the Seaman Scientology's six yachts, two of which are sometimes docked at Southern California marinas. They also serve as "ethics" supervisors for some advanced courses.

Stung by a Life magazine article last fall and a later Today's Health article (which described Scientology as a serious threat to health and a cult couched in pseudoscientific terms and rites), the organization's leaders found that their growth rate was not significantly deterred.

"We figure if we could survive the Life article, we could survive anything," said a spokesman who claimed the expose was a "smear."

Scientology has its world headquarters in Sussex, Eng., a dozen churches in U.S. and Canadian cities as well as centers in other English-speaking countries.

Staff Expansion

Although expansion of the Scientology staffs and adherents — especially in Los Angeles—is evident, detailed membership figures are difficult to obtain.

Gordon Mustain, public relations chief for the Western United States, said the U.S. membership is 5 million. Earlier this year other spokesmen had estimated the U.S. membership at 3.5 to 4 million and that Southern California had about 20,000 Scientologists — although the fact that Southern California has one of the largest followings makes the figures appear paradoxical.

A consistently agreed upon number is the 2,000 persons worldwide who have been designated "clear" and constitute the hard-core membership.

For what it may lack in numbers, it makes up in income and zeal.

South African John McMasters, the first person to be declared "clear" and a personal representative of L. Ron Hubbard, said money received by the world headquarters rose from an average \$10,000 weekly in January, 1968 to \$140,000 weekly six months later. McMasters said he did not have any more recent figures on income.

\$140 E-Meters

Scientology publications are filled with order forms for books, courses and the \$140 E-meters.

Hundreds of Scientologists have purchased E-meters and other materials to operate their own low-level "franchises," now called "missions." The "mother church" in England derives certain "tithes" from the missions, according to Mrs. Tanni Oman, another public relations representative.

The zeal shows up in their enthusiastic telephone mail followups with anyone who has ever bought a book or attended a Scientology lecture.

Some persons claim they cannot get off the Scientology mailing list once they are put on, but the organization's officials claim people are put off the list if they request.

In a counteroffensive against the "establishment," Scientologists are waging a "human rights" crusade in their publications and news releases against national mental health organizations and psychiatry in general, claiming there are widespread abuses with electrical shock treatment, hypnosis, lobotomy and other practices.

Australia Protest

More than 500 Scientologists appeared Monday at the Australian Trade Commission offices in Los Angeles, protesting what they called antireligion laws in three Australian states. An Australian consulate official in San Francisco said the three states had banned Scientology in recent years because of the organization's practices. The laws do not apply to other churches, the spokesman said.

Great Britain has prohibited foreign Scientologists from entering the country since July 1968 when the organization came under press scrutiny and a warning by then-Minister of Health Kenneth Robinson, who said the practices constituted a danger to mental health.

Scientologists claim that Robinson was later discharged for his views but a British consulate official said Robinson was not. Robinson was appointed minister of planning and land when the health ministry was merged with the department of social security.

Scientology still has its own problems in the United States because of the public scrutiny of its practices and of its claim to be a church organization.

Tax Status Revoked

The Internal Revenue Service revoked the Church of Scientology's tax-exempt status July 18, 1967, according to Jerome Hollander, an IRS spokesman in Los Angeles.

The revocation was based on an IRS claim that Ron Hubbard's founding church in Washington, D.C., was not a church, but a profit-making, commercial enterprise.

In a U.S. Court of Claims

decision July 16 in Washington, the court avoided ruling on the IRS' contention that the Church of Scientology is a commercial enterprise but supported the IRS' claim that a portion of the church's net earnings went to private individuals and therefore was not eligible to be tax exempt.

Court of Claims Judge Linton M. Collins wrote in the decision: "What emerges from these facts is the inference that the Hubbard family was entitled to make ready, personal use of the corporate earnings."

Legal Front

On another legal front, the FDA claimed in 1963 that Scientology had made misleading statements about the E-meter's healing powers and a federal jury agreed.

However, Judge J. Skelly Wright of the U.S. Court of Appeals said last February that unless the FDA can show Scientology is not a religion, the organization would be protected by law.

The Church of Scientology has its clergy—complete with black suits and collar—to perform church services, weddings and funerals.

The handbook for church ceremonies instructs that prayers are not to be used, sermons should be always on some phase of Scientology and services should be conducted with dignity, but not solemnity.

Also, "The minister should dress in a way that does not upset the accepted stable data of what a minister looks like."

Church Functions

After conducting a wedding ceremony (in which God was not mentioned) at a Scientology conference in the Hollywood Palladium, McMasters commented, "There is not much here that indicates it's religious — but by whose standards?"

McMasters hinted that the church functions in Scientology are secondary. But he maintained: "The way we can most honestly describe ourselves to mankind is as a religious group, because our purpose is to bring spiritual freedom to oneself and to the rest of mankind."

Testimonials by persons undergoing Scientology processing, however, invariably describe increased

ability to cope with their personal and professional lives—rather than spiritual understanding or fulfillment.

Actress Carolyn Judd, daughter of former Congressman Walter Judd, interviewed after a few months of experience with Scientology said she could handle roles she couldn't before and was suddenly able to read music.

"What Scientology does is put you in an environment where you understand what you're doing that's limiting your own ability. It hands you a tool—not a belief. It's a technology."

Miss Judd, 26, who played the blind girl in "Wait Until Dark" on Broadway and on the road, was given Scientology processing free, but she added, "It would cost incredibly less than what I paid in psychoanalysis for two years."

Scientologists have increased their attempt to appeal to persons in the entertainment field. A new location for Scientology's three-month-old Celebrity Centre was dedicated July 15 at the corner of Burlington Ave. and 8th St. Music, films and Scientology lectures are scheduled seven nights a week, sometimes with special invitations to the cast of a play showing in Los Angeles.

Interest in Occult

Those attracted to Scientology often have an interest in the occult—"the powers of your mind" religions—says Dr. Sidney Walter, a Hollywood psychologist.

"What Scientology is basically saying is, 'If you could clear your mind of problems, you'd be happy,'" said Dr. Walter.

"Scientology provides exercises to condition your mind to eavesdrop on the past," he said. "That part is not really bad. Anytime you can teach a person to be less inhibited, it helps."

The danger, he said, comes when a mentally disturbed person believes the 100% guaranteed results claimed by Scientology and finds he cannot achieve what he thinks he should. Dr. Walter said he had a patient three years ago who attempted suicide after believing that he failed in Scientology where others could succeed.

If Scientology appears to have a mystical, almost

Practices of Scientology Being Investigated Again

science-fiction sound to it, it shouldn't be too surprising.

The dianetics-scientology concepts of the Nebraska-born Hubbard first found themselves in print in the May, 1950, issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*.

Beyond his basic tenet that a person has an analytic mind and a reactive mind, the latter being the root of one's irrational behavior, the 58-year-old leader has developed a jargon peculiar to Scientology with terms such as "engram," "ARC break" and "Operating Thetan."

The advanced, or Operating Thetan, courses are divided into eight steps with prices listed for each level.

OT3, for instance, is described in a handbook as "the band or wall of fire that L. Ron Hubbard single-handedly confronted and found a completely safe way through for you."

Hubbard Quote

On OT3, Hubbard is quoted: "It is very true that a great catastrophe occurred on this planet and in the other 75 planets which form this confederacy 75 million years ago. It has since that time been a desert."

Explains the handbook: "OT3 is the full revelation of what happened and its resolution. At the level of OT3 the barriers that obscure the ultimate truth of the universe are blown."

While pushing aside barriers to "the ultimate truth of the universe" might seem about as far as one could go, there's more.

OT4 provides the "final polish" and OT5 enables one to look "at the fabric of the mest (matter, energy, space and time) universe and understand its simplicity." At OT6, there's a return to "basic drills."

More than 200 persons, including actor Stephen Boyd, have reached OT6—the highest level obtainable so far. Ron, as members affectionately

refer to him is still doing research on the last two levels.

"Ron is his own guinea pig," said McMasters. "As soon as he is quite sure about it, he'll put it out for the rest of us," he added confidently.

"He's a tremendous man. He's not interested in being the glorious Ron Hubbard. He's interested in freeing people," said McMasters.

A Los Angeles public relations man who spent \$1,300 in eight months of processing before dropping out said:

"You keep paying money to get deeper and deeper

to the place where you hope to get something more out of it than you have, and you keep going." Any grievances about the system, he claimed, "are merely acknowledged and put down as a problem in your case."

The best description of the frustration that some initiates have, according to the public relations man, was from another ex-Scientologist:

"It's as if Ron Hubbard was digging a tunnel deeper and deeper into a mountain and everybody following the light was going farther and farther from the outside."

