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## A COMBATIVE CHURCH

# Scientology: A Long Trail of Controversy



L. Ron Hubbard

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On May 14, 1951, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard wrote to the U.S. attorney general to plead for help in fending off a Communist conspiracy, dedicated, he averred, to destroying him. "When, when, when," he wrote, "will we have a roundup?"

Rambling through seven single-spaced typewritten pages, the letter was, to all appearances, the heartfelt cry of a troubled man.

A successful science fiction writer in the 1940s, L. Ron Hubbard, as he signed himself, had gone on to bigger things. He had "discovered" (not invented, he insisted) dianetics, an amalgam of Freudian psychology and computer terminology which he propounded as the answer to human aberration, emotional anxiety, psychosomatic illness and the common cold.

His book, "Dianetics—The Modern Science of Mental Health," had been an instant success in May of 1950, and Hubbard had poured the proceeds from his best-seller into the formation of the Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation with branches in Elizabeth, N.J.; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; New York, Los Angeles and Honolulu.

Only a year later, state medical authorities in New Jersey were investigating him on suspicion of conducting a medical school without a license, his foundation was on the verge of bankruptcy, his second marriage was in shambles and he suspected his wife and many of his close associates of Communist activities.

"The Communist Party have in the past year wiped out a half-a-million dollar operation for me, have cost me my health and have considerably retarded material of interest to the United States Government," Hubbard said in the letter, which the FBI released in 1977 under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Church spokesmen in Los Angeles were shown a copy of the letter by Times reporters in early August and have not challenged its authenticity.

Russians, moreover, were trying to lure him to the Soviet Union to acquire his secrets of brainwashing while at the same time trying to destroy dianetics, "an American Science," Hubbard said.

And there were mysterious attacks, three in all, each while he slept. The most severe, Hubbard wrote, occurred in February, 1951, in his apartment on N. Rossmore St. in Los Angeles.

"About two or three o'clock in the morning, the apartment was entered, I was knocked out, had a needle thrust into my heart to give it a jet of air to produce a coronary thrombosis and was given an electric shock with a 110-volt current. All this is all very blurred to me. I had no witnesses."

It was not the first such communication the Justice Department had received from Hubbard and it would not be the last. Four years later, the FBI made the notation "appears mental" on one of his missives and ceased acknowledging them.

Whatever the FBI may think of him, it is unlikely that the FBI or anyone else outside Hubbard's small circle of loyal followers quite anticipated his capacity for rebounding from misfortune.

Twenty-seven years later, the 67-year-old Hubbard stands venerated by several hundred thousand followers in the United States, Europe and scattered parts of Africa and Asia as the founding patriarch of the Church of Scientology.

From a faddish metaphysical cult in the early 1950s, Hubbardian dianetics became Hubbardian Scientology and in 1954 began to assume the mantle of a new religion. Since the early 1960s, Scientology under the guidance of Hubbard and his third wife, Mary Sue, has metamorphosed into an elaborate Orwellian theocracy of imposing international scale, influence and wealth.

In the intervening years Hubbard's expanding organization has left a trail of controversy across four continents as medical authorities attacked Scientology's therapeutic claims and governments resisted its efforts to gain the special protections that Western society accords to religious organizations—notably, tax-exempt status. Scientology in turn lashed back at its critics with vitriolic combativeness.

"Don't ever defend. Always attack . . . Only attacks resolve threats," Hubbard advised his expanding worldwide organization in a policy laid down Aug. 15, 1960. "If attacked . . . always find or manufacture enough threat against them to cause them to sue for peace."

"People who attack Scientology are criminals," Hubbard wrote in later church documents. "Politician A stands up on his hind legs in a parliament and brays for condemnation of Scientology. When we look him

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# Scientology—A Long Trail of Controversy

## Combative Church of '70s Emerges From Metaphysical Cult of '50s

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over we find crimes—embezzled funds, moral lapses, a thirst for young boys—sordid stuff."

Accusations, in the late 1960s and early 1970s by orthodox psychologists and psychiatrists, that Scientology represented a detriment to community mental health and involved unscrupulous business practices prompted formal government inquiries in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England and South Africa.

The practice of Scientology was banned in much of Australia from 1965 until 1973, when the organization won recognition as a church. Britain in 1968 banned the entry of foreign nationals, including Hubbard and his wife, for the purpose of studying Scientology. Last March, a French court convicted Hubbard and two associates in absentia of fraudulent medical practice and set a fine equivalent to \$7,000.

Through it all, Hubbard has remained an enigmatic, reclusive figure, insulated by his church from the tribulations of the world, isolated from most of his followers, preoccupied with churning out doctrinal texts, policy directives and tape-recorded sermons that his spokesmen estimate exceed a cumulative total of 25 million words.

Since the British ban was instituted in 1968, Hubbard has been barred from what Scientologists term the "Mother Church," a 20-room mansion on a 57-acre estate at East Grinstead, Sussex. Saint Hill Manor, as the estate was known in the days when the Maharajah of Jaipur owned it, has, since 1959, been the international headquarters of the Church of Scientology.

In lieu of British residence, Hubbard spent much of his time until last year aboard his 3,280-ton converted

ferry, the Apollo, plying the Atlantic and Mediterranean in the company of a Scientology elite called the Sea Org, whose members customarily sign a "billion year contract" swearing fealty to "Ron."

Church spokesmen say the Sea Org now has its headquarters on land (at a \$2.8 million center purchased in 1976 at Clearwater, Fla.), that the Apollo was sold 14 months ago, and that Hubbard is currently "traveling in the United States and Europe" looking for a permanent place to settle in his retirement years.

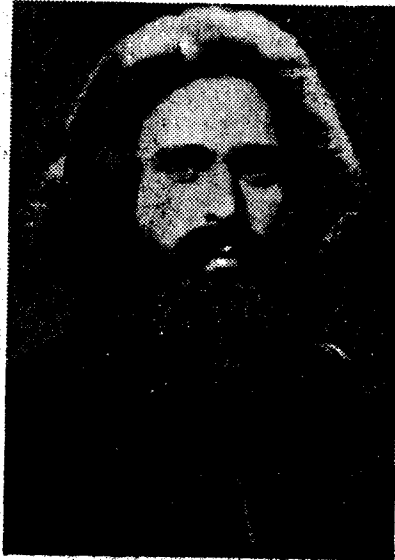
Reliable, independent estimates of Scientology's following do not exist. Although the numbers are undoubtedly large, figures provided by the church itself are often inconsistent and sometimes appear inflated.

Spokesmen for Scientology, for example, often assert that theirs is "the world's fastest-growing religion." Hubbard himself said in 1964 that his followers were "in the millions" and were doubling in number every six months—a rate at which the membership of Scientology would have exceeded the entire world's population before the end of 1969.

At various times and places in the past two years, Scientology spokesmen have put the organization's adherents at between 4.5 million and 15 million. The church currently claims 3.5 million in the United States and another 1 million abroad, but acknowledges that these figures include everyone who has either taken one Scientology counseling course or bought two of its books.

When pressed for the number of people consistently involved in Scientology in the United States, spokesmen have—for the past two years—put forward the figure of 600,000.

Whatever the precise numbers, Scientology plainly appeals to thou-



REFORM—Church spokesman Arthur J. Maren tells of plans for Scientology reform group.

sands of people here and abroad who, as church officials point out, would not continue investing in its counseling if they felt it were of no benefit. Testimonials from such celebrity-participants as former '49er quarterback John Brodie and actor John Travolta have helped enhance Scientology's public image.

And there is no reason to believe that Scientology's parishoners have been cognizant of, much less a party to, the controversial activities of the church's worldwide Guardian Office.

The grassroots organization of Scientology consists of churches in large urban areas supplemented by more numerous missions (formerly called "franchises") that are often small storefront operations. To non-members, perhaps the most familiar distinguishing characteristic of Scientology is the organization's aggressive

sidewalk recruitment appeal to take a "free personality test."

An organizational list that the California headquarters church in Los Angeles filed in a federal court proceeding on May 10, 1977, enumerates 16 churches and 72 smaller missions in the United States and an additional 33 churches and 47 missions in 16 other countries.

According to an attractive book published by the California organization and entitled, "Scientology: A World Religion Emerges in the Space Age," all of these entities are "autonomous corporations operated on a separate basis but united by a theological bond of common doctrine, practice and belief."

Although the book does not say so, the principal churches of Scientology around the world are also united with the Mother Church in England by the electronic bond of telex. Saint Hill Manor functions both as an advanced training school and as command center for the Hubbard Communications Office, an incorporated administrative body from which emanates a steady stream of doctrinal, internal management and fiscal policy directives complete with coded marginalia and security classifications that give them more the ambience of State Department cables to embassies overseas than ecclesiastic communications.

Among material the FBI seized from the church, for example, is a Sept. 17, 1976, document listing 18 pages concerning codes and security classifications for "various communications."

Saint Hill is also world headquarters for the Guardian Order, a secretive, parallel administrative structure that extends into the principal churches abroad.

In a policy letter from the Hubbard Communications Office dated May 20, 1970, and transmitted to churches overseas, Mary Sue Hubbard explained that the Guardian Order's purview would include such sensitive matters as liaison with news media and government agencies as well as "Special Guardian relations," "Opposition Group relations," and "Troublesome relations."

Federal investigators and former church officials have said that the Guardian Office's responsibilities include intelligence gathering and covert operations against those whom the church regards as its enemies, or "suppressive persons" or "squirrel groups," in Scientology's terms.

While communiqués flow out from Saint Hill Manor, money flows in. Of each church's and mission's gross receipts, 10% is tithed to world headquarters. The church does not provide a public accounting of its expenditures, except to say that L. Ron Hubbard lives largely on royalties from his works including his 1950 "Dianetics," now in its 26th printing.

Although the essentials of dianetics have become the doctrine of Scientology, the church appears to consider the book itself obsolete. Indeed, the California branch said in 1974 that "the obsolescence of early dianetics is extremely well-known among Scientologists."

The book's obsolescence has not deterred the Church of Scientology from promoting its sale, however.

Last May the church launched a \$650,000 national television and magazine advertising campaign in 21 cities to push sales of the 28-year-old book, which costs \$2 in paperback. A similar campaign in Los Angeles last year helped sell 100,000, a fifth of all those sold in the United States in 1977.

George Chelekis, a Scientology publicist in New York, said the church is also spending another \$125,000 this year to promote a "revised version" of Hubbard's 1958 book, "Have You Lived Before This Life?"

Data on the Church of Scientology's worldwide finances are as elusive as its membership figures. But the organization's practice of buying multimillion-dollar properties with hard cash suggests, along with other evidence, a robust financial condition.

In January of 1974, for example, the Church of Scientology paid \$1.1 million for a former Jesuit novitiate and 805 acres of land near Salem, Ore. In December, 1975, the church bought an old hotel and nearby bank building near Clearwater, Fla., for conversion to an administrative and training center, and paid in excess of \$2.3 million by a check drawn on a Luxembourg bank.

In June, 1976, the California church paid \$5.5 million in cash for a disused Cedars of Lebanon hospital in Los Angeles which now serves as Scientology's North American headquarters.

A variety of internal church documents, which were not intended for publication, suggest a phenomenal income growth during the 1970s—and in turn help explain the urgency with which the church has sought to protect its assets with the tax-exempt status of a religious organization.

One such document, a mimeographed "Order of the Day," circulated April 9, 1973, aboard Hubbard's flagship Apollo, states that the worldwide organization's gross annual income grew from 390,666 British pounds (about \$1 million at prevailing rates) in 1966-67 to \$8.5 million in 1972-73. The document projected 1974 gross income at the equivalent of \$24 million.

Former church officials have estimated the church's annual gross income worldwide at \$100 million or more.

Most of Scientology's income derives from the fees or "fixed donations" that its churches and missions charge for the organization's novel form of psychological counseling or "auditing" that constitutes Scientology's main ecclesiastical activity. Pa-



**THE PRINTED WORD**—A sample of publications expressing views of the Church of Scientology. Times photo

tioners are expected to spend sums ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars for auditing courses that promise to relieve anxieties, expand one's self-esteem and "awareness," enhance the intellect and open the way to self-determination and "total freedom."

These promises are founded upon Hubbard's conception of the human mind and its foibles and he began to elucidate them in his 1950 book on dianetics.

Hubbard wrote that the source of all human aberration and most illness was a primitive subconscious he called the "reactive mind." This, he said, was a "memory bin" of painful traumatic experiences recorded in the form of "engrams." As the root of all evil, engrams interfered with the workings of an unerringly rational, computerlike "analytic mind."

In a theme of prenatal violence that weaves through the book, Hubbard said repeatedly that many engrams date from one's days in the womb. "Mama gets hysterical, baby gets an engram. Papa hits mama, baby gets an engram . . . and so it goes."

Only by dredging up painful experiences and guilt feelings during auditing could one identify and banish accumulated engrams and achieve the exalted, purely rational state of "clear."

Had he gone no further, Hubbard's treatise on dianetics might have been remembered as an imaginative recasting of Freudian psychology and perhaps as a forerunner of assertiveness training. But Hubbard proclaimed an array of medical fringe benefits for "clears" that put him on a collision course with medical authorities up to and including the federal Food and Drug Administration.

"The problem of psychosomatic illness is entirely encompassed by dianetics, and by dianetic technique such illness has been eradicated entirely in every case," he wrote.

"Arthritis vanishes, myopia gets better, heart illness decreases, asthma disappears, stomachs function properly, and the whole catalog of ills goes away and stays away."

"Clears," Hubbard added, "do not get colds."

In a later publication he said that Scientology and the dianetic "therapy" it incorporated could "make the blind see again, the lame walk again, the ill recover and the sane saner."

In the ensuing hue and cry from the medical profession, Hubbard's chain of dianetic foundations from New Jersey to California withered quickly. He briefly reestablished himself in Kansas, then retreated to Phoenix, where in 1954 he incorporated the Hubbard Academy of Scien-

tology and then the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington, D.C., with branches in Los Angeles.

Dianetics now reappeared, but under the banner of Scientology and embroidered with elements of Buddhism, Hinduism and the galactic wanderings of a migratory wraith called the "thetan."

It was not the brain that harbored the obtrusive engrams, but the "thetan," or soul, Hubbard now held. Over the course of trillions of years (in contrast to the approximately 15 billion years astronomers assign to the age of the present universe) thetans had accumulated a weighty burden of engrams during successive reincarnations, and the challenge of purging them now seemed more formidable.

Going "clear" became a more difficult, and expensive, endeavor.

To help preclears disencumber themselves from ous of engrams, Hubbard in 1954 introduced the E-meter, a simple electronic device resembling a lie detector. It consists of a galvanometer in a wooden box, circuitry called a balanced Wheatstone bridge that is sensitive to small changes in skin resistance that might (or might not) be related to anxiety, and two metal cans wired to the device.

The preclear clutches the cans while the interrogating auditor fires questions and watches for the needle to bobble about in the violent "theta bops" indicative of a sensitive engram.

The Canadian inquiry into Scientology, conducted by the Ontario provincial government in 1968, observed that Hubbard, by reconstituting dianetics in the form of religious corporations, had realized a distinct advantage: "that the field of religion is much less restricted than the field of medicine."

Hubbard's appreciation of this distinction is evidenced in a variety of internal memoranda, including a policy letter dispatched from Saint Hill Manor over his name to the Washington, New York and Los Angeles offices of Scientology on Oct. 29, 1962. Noting that the federal Food and Drug Administration was showing "interest" in the E-meter, Hubbard said that "Scientology 1970 is being planned on a religious organization basis throughout the world."

"This will not upset the usual activities of any organization (within Scientology). It is entirely a matter for accountants and solicitors."

The benefits of church status were demonstrated the following year, when the Food and Drug Administration raided the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington, D.C., and seized 100 E-meters and two tons of

literature that the government said falsely branded E-meters as useful in treatment of ailments ranging from schizophrenia to radiation burns to polio and the common cold.

The Church of Scientology fought the case in federal courts for 10 years, arguing that the FDA seizure had violated the constitutional protections afforded religious freedom. In a limited sense, Scientology won.

Federal District Judge Gerhard Gesell ruled in 1971 that the church had advanced "extravagant false claims" that physical and mental illness could be cured through therapy involving the E-meter, and he said such claims were "quackery." But Gesell also said the church was entitled to First Amendment protection as a religion and could use the E-meters in religious counseling.

In the interim, Scientology has retreated from claiming to cure psychosomatic or mental illness, and its publications now carry a disclaimer that the E-meter is not "intended or effective" for medical uses.

The organization's literature now insists that Scientology's purpose is no more than to make the "able more able" and to treat ills of the spirit, not the mind and body.

For these services, the church charges what it calls "fixed donations."

An introductory course aimed at improving one's communications skills and bolstering self-confidence costs \$75. Being audited all the way to clear can take two years and cost \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Achieving the supreme state of "Operating Thetan" can cost thousands more, and according to the church's price lists, the cost of Scientology counseling is rising by 5% a month for an annual inflation rate of 60%.

"What governments, people and even our orgs (organizations) can't get understood is that NO PRODUCTION-No Money," Hubbard explained in a Nov. 27, 1971, policy letter entitled "Money."

"The staff member, as part of the org, may think his pay comes from mysterious places. It does not. It comes from his own personal production . . ."

"It is up to Division 6 (the church's marketing division) to build up a DEMAND for the services and a volume of people who then demand the service. It does this with surveys of what the public will buy that the org can offer. It then makes the public aware of this by ads and contacts. The public comes in and pays . . . That is really all there is to it."

Monday: How the church has dealt with individuals it sees as enemies.