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Judge brands Scientology 'sinister' as mother is given custody of children

The Scientology cult was branded "corrupt, sinister and dangerous" by a High Court judge in London yesterday when he ordered two young children to be placed in the custody of their mother.)

He described the practices of the founder of the so-called "church", Ron Hubbard and his helpers, as "grimly reminiscent of the rating and bullying of Hitler and his henchmen".

Mr Justice May ordered a Scientist father to hand over his son, aged 10, and daughter, aged eight to their mother, who has fought for almost six years to be reunited with them, after herself breaking away from the cult.

She plans to take them to a new life in another country where she now lives with art dealer and ex-scientologist whom she plans to marry.

The judge, giving an open court judgment after a private hearing because of the public importance of the case, ordered that the identities of the children, both wards of court, should be kept secret.

He also ordered the cult to stop intimidating and harassing the mother, and future stepfather, or they would be dealt with the "utmost severity".

Giving his reasons for taking the children away from the father, who lives with and has married another woman, after divorcing his wife, the judge said: "Scientology is both immoral and socially obnoxious. In my judgment it is corrupt, sinister and dangerous. It is corrupt because it is based on lies and deceit and has as its

al objective money and power

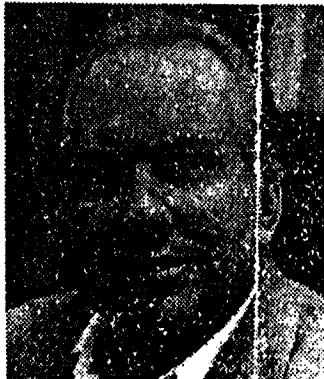
for Mr Hubbard, his wife, and those close to him at the top.

"It is sinister because it indulges in infamous practices both to its adherents, who do not toe the line unquestionably, and to those outside who criticize or oppose it.

"It is dangerous because it is out to capture people, especially children and impressionable young people, and indoctrinate and brainwash them so that they become the unquestioning captives and tools of the cult, withdrawn from ordinary thought, living, and relationships with others".

He described Mr Hubbard and his wife, Mary, as a "charlatan and worse". To escape from their clutches, as the mother and stepfather had done, "calls for great courage and resolution", because "the stranglehold is tight and unrelenting and the discipline ruthless".

Individuals were brainwashed into unquestioning



Mr L. Ron Hubbard:
"Char' ton and worse".

obedience and the methods could be very dangerous to the mental health of the trainee. They were kept impoverished so that they became completely dependent on the organization for their basic needs.

There had been much evidence as to how Scientology broke up marriages and alienated children from their parents. He gave examples which showed "the ruthless and inhuman disciplinary measures" used. The methods blocked out all reasoning powers, and everything had to be paid for.

The two children were at a school controlled by Scientologists. The father said the school was independent of Scientology and he would let the children decide when they were old enough whether they wanted to become Scientologists.

The "baleful influence" of the church was ever present and to leave the children with the father would be to leave them "gravely at risk".

In their interests the mother should be given care and control. But they would not be cut off entirely from the father who loved them as they loved him, he would still be allowed access, the judge said.

The judge said the "church" resorted "to lies and deceit whenever it thinks it will profit it to do so". By reading extensively from their own documents, he thought they would find it less easy to "gull and dupe others".

A spokesman for the "church" said after the hearing that the judge's comments were "like Alice in Wonderland".