

*Guest Editorial***PSYCHIATRY AND  
SCIENTOLOGY**

by L. J. West, M.D.



The Church of Scientology began as a pseudo-scientific healing cult, Dianetics, described by L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer, in his best-selling book Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health (1950). At first, Dianetics attracted followers by promising to cure psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders through a procedure called "dianetic auditing," based on pop-psychology, hypnosis, and cybernetics. Hubbard's therapy was based on the principle that people can achieve health through abolishing ("clearing") negative influences ("engrams") from their minds by going back (often to the womb) on a "time track" while in a "dianetic reverie" in the presence of a listening "auditor." The subject is hooked up to a simple psychogalvanometer, called an "E-meter," which displays galvanic skin responses (GSRs) to questions posed by the auditor. Emotionally charged items are then addressed.

In its early years Dianetics was faced by legal problems related to statutes governing the practice of medicine and other health professions. However, in 1954 Hubbard and his attorneys legally transformed the non-professional psychotherapy of Dianetics into a religious enterprise called the Church of Scientology. Under its privileged status as a religion, there was no stopping the extraordinary expansion of Scientology. Despite a series of scandals and lawsuits, the bizarre little mental healing cult grew into a multi-million dollar, international enterprise, openly peddling its private brand of psychotherapy under the aegis of a religion—thus remaining immune from malpractice lawsuits (although

not from suits for damages or fraud), statutes governing the healing arts, and health professional committees on ethics.

Dianetic auditing offers a series of therapeutic "courses" (with payment by contract in advance) on a path from "pre-release" to "release" to "pre-clear" to the rare but ultimate "clear" (of all engrams) to reach "total freedom". Each treatment course is really a succession of auditing sessions to rid the individual of unwanted attitudes, emotions and behaviors. Auditors themselves receive training through courses of their own. This works as a sort of pyramid scheme, with thousands of people auditing those at levels below them while being audited by others at levels above them. As in all pyramid schemes, most of the money ends up at the top.

The final challenge for the "clear" Scientologist is to become an "Operating Thetan". Here again there are several further steps for advanced Scientologists to gain greater comprehension of Hubbard's "religious" teachings (grafted on to the original Dianetics) about how aberrant behavior was implanted in humans 75 million years ago by an evil ruler named Xenu from another galaxy. Xenu froze humans and dropped them into volcanoes. After killing humans with hydrogen bombs to combat overpopulation, Xenu collected their spirits as they rose from the volcanoes and implanted the spirits with evil thoughts. Since then, clusters of these evil spirits ("body Thetans")

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Professionals**

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have attached themselves to humans as they are reincarnated through eons of time, and are responsible for all aberrant behaviors.

Enlightenment isn't cheap. Depending on ability to pay (or willingness to mortgage one's future) individuals can spend from initially small amounts up to \$1,000 per hour of auditing which is purchased in twelve half-hour blocks called "intensives". It can cost \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more to complete—if ever—the numerous courses. There are also hundreds of optional courses based on Hubbard's teachings which can range in price up to \$16,500. A growing number of members now have families within the organization. Their children attend private schools run by Scientologists. Staff members are subject to a detailed code of behavior, with progressive punishments for errors, misdemeanors, crimes, and high crimes.

Scientology portrays itself as a victim of persecution by a conspiracy involving the media, the U.S. government, various medical organizations (including the World Federation of Mental Health and the National Association of Mental Health in Great Britain), and a number of individuals including government officials, some traditional clergy, certain physicians and others who have openly criticized their practices. It has filed hundreds of lawsuits over the years, taking on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Internal Revenue Service, and endlessly harassing a number of individual critics. On August 15, 1978 a Federal grand jury in Washington, DC indicted 11 top leaders of the Church of Scientology for conducting a wide range of illegal activities including the infiltration, bugging and burglary of the Justice Department, the IRS, and other federal agencies. Scientology also conducts sophisti-

cated intelligence and propaganda operations against private organizations and individual critics who are classified as enemies or "suppressive persons". A special branch created by Hubbard in 1966 performs "dirty tricks", such as calling in anonymous death threats, smearing individual enemies, sending out phoney compromising letters on the "suppressive person's" letterhead, making anonymous phone calls to the IRS accusing enemies of cheating on their taxes, etc. "Dirty tricks", like more formal public relations campaigns and spurious lawsuits, seem primarily intended by Scientology to destroy the individual enemy's reputation, to harass, discourage and intimidate. All this is justified by Hubbard's policy declaring "suppressive persons" to be "fair game".

The Citizen's Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), one of Scientology's front organizations, is frequently behind both personal and professional attacks against members of the medical profession, especially of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The CCHR, was established in 1969 to investigate and publicize psychiatric "violations of human rights". These "violations" include the profession's use of electroconvulsive therapy, the use of methylphenidate (Ritalin) for children with attention deficit disorder and indeed any use of medication by psychiatrists from Phenothiazines to Prozac. In fact, they literally declared war on *Newsweek* for running a cover story on Prozac in a recent issue. For some years Scientologists organized by the CCHR have staged demonstrations at the time and place of the annual APA meeting. Sometimes airplanes fly overhead pulling banners proclaiming, "PSYCHIATRY KILLS". These protests often attract significant media coverage. Meanwhile, individual critics may be picketed, defamed, abused and harassed in various ways without respite for years.

Another Scientology front group

in Narconon, a nationwide enterprise that claims to rehabilitate drug addicts using withdrawal, diet supplements, exercise, sauna sessions and, inevitable, dianetic auditing. They claim an 86% cure rate. So cunning has been their sales pitch that Narconon has attracted considerable extramural support. Two school systems in Idaho hire Narconon agents to instruct their schoolchildren about drugs. In Michigan the Department of Corrections contracted with Narconon to rehabilitate its prisoners. Currently in Newkirk, Oklahoma, Narconon is attempting to obtain a permanent license for a treatment facility at the nearby Chilocco Indian School. Last year in Spain, authorities charged Narconon with swindling clients and luring them into Scientology. Seventy-one people were arrested, including Scientology president Heber Jentsch; hundreds of documents were seized; and a Spanish judge froze bank accounts holding \$900,000. (The suspects

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**CALL FOR PAPERS**

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for a special issue, which may be co-published as a book on  
**HISPANIC AGED  
MENTAL HEALTH**

Send a rough draft, outline, or letter of interest as soon as possible to:

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several times. In its present form, as of June 1990 amendments, it will require that prescriptions written could be refilled up to 90 days. After that time, the patient has to be reevaluated by the physician or the physician has to talk personally on the phone with the patient in order to renew the prescription. The bill moves Benzodiazapines to schedule III. Failure to abide by the requirements of the bill would constitute a felony. At the present time both CMA and CPA are not particularly happy with this version of the bill. However, this is far more acceptable than the original version.

The impetus behind this bill is the consumer groups' response to abusive practices with Benzodiazapines. The bulk of the abuse is by non-psychiatrists. The pharmaceutical industry is interested in having SCPS prepare educational programs to reach internists, pediatricians, and other physicians

# Southern California PSYCHIATRIST

Newsletter of the Southern California Psychiatric Society

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version in order to gain admission privileges in hospitals on the basis of non-discrimination just as psychologists have done.

5. There are a number of other issues currently being debated. One has to do with the issue of physician discipline (SB2375, sponsored by Presley). At the present time, CMA is opposed to this bill and has originated a bill sponsored by Filanta as a response. It is not clear which version will be the final one.

The second major issue is on the matter of access to care. CMA has made a proposal which is currently being studied and evaluated as to actuarial data by the legislature. CPA has given input to this proposal providing guidelines with respect to inpatient and outpatient coverage. CPA has agreed to a minimal mental health benefits package. This package provides for non-discrimination coverage under

ror coverage under the same terms and conditions as major medical benefits for other life threatening and gravely disabling mental disorders where the application of a limited mental health benefit alone would otherwise pose a significant risk to the life of the person or others".

There is the associated proposal that mental health benefits as outlined above can be converted on a formula "based on the standard of two days of day care treatment or four out-patient visits per hospital day upon prior approval". This is a minimum mental health package and it is used for purposes of drafting legislation and for entering into discussions about access to care. It was conceived as part of the effort to present a reasonable psychiatric position that could be agreed upon rather than an optimum or preferred position that would be rejected out of hand.

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were released after a brief jail stay while the investigation continued.)

The medical profession as a whole, and psychiatry in particular, has generally failed to fight back or even take notice of Scientology, its slanders and other depredations. In the medical literature there are only a handful of references to Scientology. It is clear that the legitimate healing professions have not come to grips with the dangers posed by cults in general, and with the peculiarly hostile and anti-psychiatric "church" of Scientology in particular.

Most people know surprisingly little about Scientology. Only a handful of books and articles, and a few journalistic pieces in the popular press, have been written

about Hubbard and his organization. In May 1980 and September 1981, the *Reader's Digest* published two articles about Scientology and its dangers. Recent informative books on Hubbard are: *L. Ron Hubbard, Messiah or Madman* by Bent Corydon and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., and *Barefaced Messiah* by Russell Miller. An excellent six-part series about Scientology in the *Los Angeles Times* began in the edition of June 24, 1990.

Unfortunately, the harms done by Scientology go far beyond attacks on psychiatry or on critics. It is Scientology's membership, and their families, who are the most likely to suffer. Many damaged persons are emerging from the cult, often with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder including prominent dissociative features. Some of these refugees seek help from psychiatrists. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to continue investigating the nature of harms done by cults such as the Church of Scientology and to publish our findings regardless of the consequences.

