

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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CORRECTION

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In June 1998, The Globe and Mail distributed copies of Freedom Journal, Volume 2, Issue 1, as an insert. Freedom Journal is published by the Church of Scientology. Articles appearing in that edition of Freedom Journal made certain allegations concerning University of Alberta Professor of Sociology, Stephen A. Kent (PhD). The Globe and Mail is not aware of any factual foundation for the printed allegations made against Dr. Kent in those articles. The Globe and Mail apologizes to Dr. Kent for any embarrassment caused to him.

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defamatory attack

In early June, The Globe and Mail distributed an insert published by The Church of Scientology entitled *Freedom*. This insert contained an article that amounted to a lengthy and defamatory attack on me and my research on new and alternative religions, particularly Scientology itself.

As an insert in The Globe and Mail, this Scientology publication and the article about me may have enjoyed a greater degree of credibility than would otherwise have been the case, which prompts my response in these pages.

Presumably, the attack on me was occasioned by my published work and presentations about Scientology, including those in which I have stated my concerns about what I perceived as probable human-rights abuses within the Scientology organization. The article was especially critical of, but vague about, presentations that I made in Germany last year concerning Scientology. From reading the article, no one could know that my presentations were about what in my view are Scientology's probable human-rights abuses, and that I made these presentations at the invitation of German government officials and others who were investigating Scientology.

Rather than engage me in a dialogue or debate about these human-rights issues and concerns, Scientology — through its publication — chose to launch a personal attack upon my character and research skills.

My statements and conclusions about Scientology are thoroughly researched, carefully documented, and based on interviews and extensive citations from the organization's own materials. Moreover, I take full responsibility for what I have written and said. In contrast, no individual takes responsibility for being the author of the statements made against me in the Scientology publication, or even for the publication itself. Why not?

I am not the only researcher who ques-

tions Scientology's practices or who reports on them. Many Web sites devote themselves to the debates surrounding the controversial organization. One of the most thorough sites may be found at <http://www.xenu.net/>

In my view, the heightened media attention that Scientology is receiving indicates that increasing numbers of people are realizing that Scientology deserves close scrutiny. Earlier this year, Canadians may have seen a television segment about Scientology on CBS's *Public Eye* with Bryant Gumbel. Likewise articles on the same topic ran in the July 21, 1997, edition of Newsweek and the Dec. 1, 1997, edition of The New York Times. The Globe and Mail ran a two-part series on Scientology on Jan. 19-20, 1998. Later this year, both ABC's *20/20* and *Arts and Entertainment* will present shows concerning the organization. I am pleased that Scientology is receiving so much public attention.

Stephen A. Kent, PhD, Professor of Sociology, University of Alberta, Edmonton