

**Lester Kinsolving**

## *Suit-happy scientologists*

Churches have been generally reluctant to engage in the expense and acrimony of lawsuits ever since St. Paul counseled the Corinthian Church to avoid property litigation between members before pagan magistrates. (1 Cor. 6: 1-9)

But an organization called "The Church of Scientology" appears to have taken just the opposite course, in what seems to be a means of acquiring extensive publicity and at the same time frightening anyone inclined to expose their operations.

Scientology, which focuses upon intimate interviews using an "E-Meter" ("A circuit which has been used in quack medical devices for decades," according to the American Medical Association periodical *Today's Health*) has maintained its own "Legal Affairs Branch." And the organization has just filed a \$1.5 million libel suit against writer **Michelle Cooper and Tower Publications.**

Miss Cooper is the author of a fascinating, 220-page paperback expose entitled "The Scandal of Scientology." She holds degrees in psychology from Brandeis University and the City University of New York, and has written for 52 newspapers and other periodicals, as well as having written three previous books. She recently told this writer:

### **Amazing record**

"Since I was well aware of this organization's amazing record of suing for libel, I spent two years in carefully researching and documenting this book. Four attorneys went over every word of it before it was published.

"They are suing me in England as well as in the U. S. When I arrived in Edinburgh last April, they met the plane and hired a photographer to bug me for days. One hundred of them surrounded the hotel, and so many phone calls were received asking for my room number that the C.I.D. (police) had to come in."

Miss Cooper's book quotes Peter Horden, a Member of Parliament.

"The public has been hampered in the knowledge of Scientology by the fact that, so far as I can establish, on every occasion that the organization has been named by a newspaper, that newspaper has been served with a writ of libel."

Miss Cooper estimates that at least 58 of such libel writs have been issued by the Scientologists — in addition to one directed against another member of Parliament, Geoffrey Johnson Smith.

Smith, in whose constituency

is located the resplendent British headquarters of Scientology, had deliberately directed itself to "the weak, the unbalanced, the immature, the rootless and the mentally or emotionally unstable."

But the jury found that his statement was neither defamatory or malicious, but substantially true and fair comment — and ordered Scientology to pay an estimated \$200,000 in court costs.

Miss Cooper quotes Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard (a former writer of science fiction) as having advised the organization:

"We do not want Scientology to be reported in the press anywhere but on the religion page. It is destructive of word of mouth to permit the public press to express their biased and badly reported sensationalism. Therefore we should be very alert to sue for slander at the slightest chance, so as to discourage the public press from mentioning Scientology."

### **Nasty phone calls**

(This program of press-dissuagement seems hardly feasible, however, given The New York Times' recent report of the interest shown for Scientology by mass-murderer Charles Manson.)

Two years ago this column first featured Scientology, reporting its recurrent difficulties

with governmental investigations in Australia, Britain and the U.S. — as well as the written claim of founder Hubbard to have created "a milestone for man, comparable to his discovery of fire, and superior to his inventions of the wheel and the arch."

Scientologists, in demanding a retraction under threat of legal action, charged that Hubbard had never made such a statement. However, this writer had obtained a copy of the third edition of Hubbard's book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," which includes precisely this absurd statement.

As for Scientological attempts to frighten publishers of this column, Managing Editor Bill Totten of California's *Huntington Park Daily Signal* wrote this writer:

"In addition to these two letters, we have received ten phone calls from the Scientologists — all of them nasty. Keep up the good work."