

Scientologists Block Access to Secret Documents

1,500 Crowd Into Courthouse to Protect Materials on Fundamental Beliefs

By JOEL SAPPPELL and ROBERT WELKOS, *Times Staff Writers*

In one of the largest court demonstrations in Los Angeles in years, about 1,500 Church of Scientology members crammed three floors of the County Courthouse on Monday, effectively blocking public access to documents that the church considers secret and sacred.

For hours, Scientologists swamped workers in the clerk's office with hundreds of requests to photocopy the documents, which reveal some of the organization's most fundamental beliefs. Scientology attorneys have argued that disclosure of the materials is a violation of the group's religious freedom.

Court officials, who said it was the largest courthouse turnout they had ever witnessed, were forced to set up three temporary windows to handle the throng.

The documents at issue were submitted as

part of a civil case brought by former Scientologist Larry Wollersheim. He claims that the organization defrauded him by promising him higher intelligence and greater business success through Scientology courses that cost thousands of dollars.

Superior Court Judge Alfred L. Margolis, over strong Scientology objections, issued an order Friday making the documents public at 9 a.m. Monday—on a first-come, first-served basis. But by snaking the line through three courthouse hallways, Scientologists made sure they were the only ones to purchase copies of the materials.

Jeff Pomerantz, a Scientology spokesman, said this strategy was intended to "keep the materials secure. . . . Religion is not supposed to be disseminated from the courtroom."

Scientologist Alan Brown of Los Angeles waited five hours starting at 6:30 a.m.—before the courthouse at 1st and Hill streets opened—to pay \$10 to have the materials photocopied. "Hopefully, nobody else will get their hands on it except us," he said.

Shortly before noon, Judge Margolis, at the request of Scientology lawyers, resealed the materials, pending a hearing today.

Scientology is widely known for its use of "auditing," a form of one-on-one counseling in which a lie detector-like instrument called an E meter is used to help a person erase negative experiences, assertedly freeing him to achieve his full potential. The group bases its beliefs on the writings of L. Ron Hubbard, the reclusive science-fiction writer who in the early 1950s

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published the best seller "Dianetics: the Modern Science of Mental Health."

What is rarely discussed, however, is Hubbard's secret teachings, which reveal his thoughts on why mankind has been plagued by problems through history, the topic of the disputed documents.

Before Scientology attorneys had requested an order to seal the documents, The Times obtained them from the court file. Generally, they suggest that a major cause of mankind's problems began 75 million years ago, when the planet Earth, then called Teegeeach, was part of a confederation of 90 planets under the leadership of a tyrannical ruler named Xemu. Then, as now, the materials state, the chief problem was overpopulation.

Xemu, the documents state, decided to take radical measures to overcome the overpopulation problem. Beings were captured on Earth and on other planets and flown to at least 10 volcanoes on Earth.

The documents state that H-

bombs far more powerful than any in existence today were dropped on these volcanoes, destroying the people but freeing their spirits—called *thetans*—which attached themselves to one another in clusters.

After the nuclear explosions, according to the documents, the *thetans* were trapped in a compound of frozen alcohol and glycol and, during a 36-day period, Xemu "implanted" in them the seeds of aberrant behavior for generations to come. When people die, these clusters attach to other humans and keep perpetuating themselves.

Before a Scientologist can learn about these *thetans* and how to eradicate them, he must go through a progression of costly programs.

In arguing to keep the court documents sealed, the church has told its members that it could be physically and spiritually harmful for them to learn about the upper levels of Scientology before they have mastered the preparatory courses.

Scientology's chief attorney, Earle Cooley, said outside the

courtroom Monday that unsealing the materials amounted to "the biggest threat to this religion so far."

He said the materials were stolen from the church and altered to hold the church's beliefs up to "ridicule, hatred and contempt"—allegations that attorneys for Wollersheim deny.

At the court's 5 p.m. closing, 440 requests had been filed with the clerk for copies of the documents. Hundreds of Scientologists still packed the corridor at day's end.

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Editorial Pages

CCJ/Part II

SCIENTOLOGY: Protest Jams County Courthouse



JOE KENNEDY / Los Angeles Times

Some of the 1,500 Church of Scientology members who visited L.A. County Courthouse in an effort to block access to documents.