

Man went bankrupt after £175,000 gifts to Scientologists

By Lin Jenkins

A MATHEMATICS graduate who founded his own computer company, went bankrupt after he "recklessly and cynically exploited" easy credit from banks, finance and credit card companies to give more than £71,000 in 17 months to the Church of Scientology.

Mr Adrian Thomas Hayman, 38, paid £175,000 to the "corrupt, sinister and dangerous" church over 14 years.

But he began increasing his average annual payments of £8,000 by borrowing.

At a public examination at Tunbridge Wells, Kent, yesterday, he denied a suggestion from Mr Stephen Harley, Assistant Official Receiver, that he borrowed the money in the knowledge it could not be repaid.

Mr Hayman admitted the borrowing had been "rash and commercially wrong".

Described as having a good knowledge of commercial morality and ethics, Mr Hayman claimed the money had been for counselling and training courses run by the church at their British headquarters in St Hill Manor, East Grinstead, Sussex.

More than £15,000 was paid for three leather-bound volumes autographed by the cult founder, Ron Hubbard, and £16,500 for an autographed "E-meter" — an electronic device used during "therapy".

Mr Harley, who rejected the suggestion that they were valuable religious artefacts, described them as virtually worthless, adding: "You paid for them because you knew it was not for the artefacts, but a donation to Scientology."

Mr Harley said Mr Hayman had run up debts of £250,000 and had a deficiency of £1,009.

Asked if he knew about a court case in 1984 concerning the church and a member who took his two children away from their mother for six years, Mr Hayman replied: "Yes".

Mr Harley then quoted Mr Justice Latey: "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 real objective money and power."

Mr Harley said: "It seems very difficult for the layman to distinguish between this church and a commercial concern."

"There are areas in this case that cause me concern."

"We have a situation of an experienced businessman recklessly and cynically exploiting the easy availability of credit to obtain monies which he had no real expectation of paying back, and immediately proceeding to put those out of reach of his creditors by putting them in the coffers of an organisation with a somewhat chequered past that has been severely criticised by the judiciary of this country."

Mr Hayman said he did not give details to his creditors of why he was borrowing money.

Mr Hayman, of Woodshill Lane, Ashurst Wood, Sussex, said he thought he could repay the money by gambling on the Stock Exchange. But after dealings worth £750,000, he lost £30,000.

Mr Hayman's wife Jocelyn, 30, a co-director in the computer company, also went bankrupt with a deficit of £13,500.

She told the public examination that all financial transactions were conducted by her husband.

Judge Birks said the public examination in both cases had been concluded.

£109,000