

SCIENTOLOGY— Menace to Mental Health

Couched in pseudoscientific terms and rites, this dangerous cult claims to help mentally or emotionally disturbed persons—for sizable fees. Scientology has grown into a very profitable worldwide enterprise . . . and a serious threat to health.



L. Ronald Hubbard,
Scientology's founder.

by RALPH LEE SMITH

LAST SUMMER in New York City, a seriously disturbed woman who was receiving psychotherapy heard about a wonderful new way to solve emotional problems. It was called Scientology. "Step into the exciting world of the totally free!" Scientology leaflets read. "Scientology processing releases you smoothly and swiftly from the tensions, oppositions, frustrations, and problems that sap your vigor and inhibit your abilities . . . Your gains will come quickly, easily."

The woman went to a Scientology center, was im-

pressed by the sales pitch, signed a contract to be "processed," and informed her analyst that she was abandoning therapy. "As you know," the enthusiastic new convert said, "Scientology and psychoanalysis don't mix."

In Washington, D.C., a man of modest means, living with his wife and family in a suburban home, fell under the Scientology spell. So far he has spent \$5000 being processed. "The only difference in him," observed a neighbor, "is that he has lost his sense of humor, constantly talks a language of gibberish that no one can understand, and is letting his family drift slowly into bankruptcy."

A Los Angeles housewife told a district attorney that she had spent \$4000 on Scientology processing, on assurances that it would help her to overcome frigidity. The net result of her investment was that her husband divorced her.

Scientology is a cult which thrives on glowing promises that are heady stuff for the lonely, the weak, the confused, the ineffectual, and the mentally or emotionally ill. For a healthy fee, Scientology claims it can "help people do something about the upsets and travails of life. Hope and happiness can return again through Scientology."

Believers have established a firm foothold in the United States and a number of foreign countries. From its international headquarters in England, the organization oversees active groups in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada. In this country, Scientology centers are operating in major cities including New York, Los Angeles, Washington, Detroit, Minneapolis, Miami, San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, and Honolulu.

On street corners and college campuses, eager Scientologists press their literature into the hands of passers-by. Widely advertised free lectures, films, and parties

Bust of Hubbard flanks "altar" in Scientology "church" near London. Among his accomplishments, Hubbard claims to have been dead and recovered, to have visited Venus and heaven.



are given almost continuously at Scientology centers.

One Scientology source says that the cult is growing at the rate of 250 percent a year in the U.S. Another enthusiast states that the total membership already is "in the millions."

Whatever the actual figures may be, it is clear that large numbers of persons are responding to Scientology's promise of a quick, easy road to mental and emotional health. Unfortunately for many, the road may lead not to health but to tragedy and disaster for themselves and their families.

At the head of this activity, ensconced at Saint Hill (a magnificent 18th century manor near London, England), surrounded by servants and scores of the faithful, with a chauffeur-driven black Jaguar at his constant disposal, lives a solidly built, broad-faced, ruddy-complexioned American named L. (for Lafayette) Ron (for Ronald) Hubbard. Hubbard, the inventor of Scientology and its predecessor Dianetics, rules over the worldwide organization with a smile, a gentle voice, and a silken-gloved iron hand. His easy assurance befits a man who says that he has been up on the Van Allen radiation belts, has dropped in on the planet Venus, and has visited heaven twice.

Hubbard was born in Tilden, Nebraska, on March 13, 1911. Scientology literature claims that he graduated with a B.S. in civil engineering from George Washington University and was "trained as one of the first nuclear physicists."

In a tax case involving a Scientology center in Washington, D.C., university officials testified that Hubbard entered school in 1930, took—and flunked—physics, was placed on probation after his first year, never returned after his second, and received no degree.

According to Scientology brochures, Hubbard also attended and received a Ph.D. from an institution called Sequoia University in California. No such university is recognized by the state Department of Education. There is a junior college in California named College of the Sequoias, but this school certainly does not grant doctorate degrees.

In the 1930's, Hubbard became a writer of science fiction and novels, using such hairy-chested pen names as Winchester Remington Colt. In 1938, he finished the manuscript of a book called *Excalibur*, containing the ideas that he later amplified into the concepts of Dianetics and Scientology.

In World War II he served in the Navy. After he left the service in 1947, he went back to work on his theories. Dianetics, the fruit of his reflections, was given to the world in an article in the May 1950 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. Soon thereafter he published a book entitled *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, which became a surprise best seller. He subsequently made a few additions to his system and rechristened it Scientology, although the term Dianetics is still used. Since then he has nearly buried his ideas in millions of words written in scores of books. He has devised such an elaborate special vocabulary that he even published a Scientology dictionary to enable people to plow through his writings.

His basic ideas, however, are simple—some say sim-



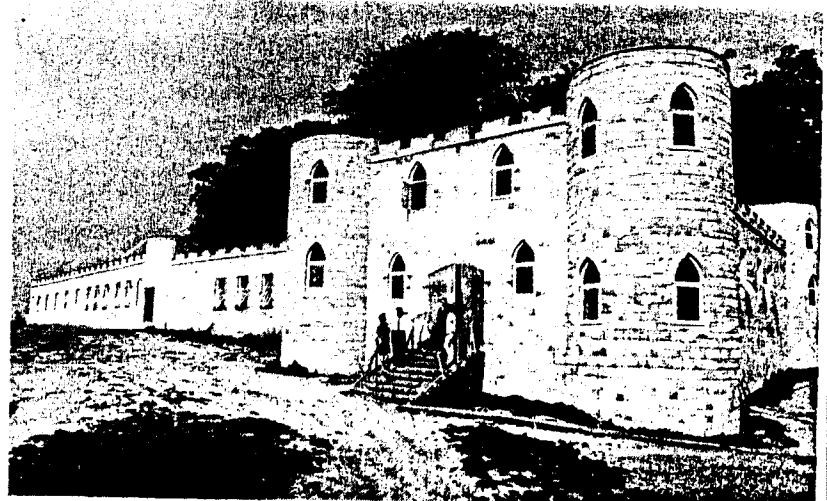
Photos: Black Star, Alan Clifton

Modern teaching methods provide aura of authenticity to instruction at Hubbard College of Scientology in Great Britain.



Students practice "auditing," using the E-meter, which supposedly indicates when a person is suppressing information.

Popularity of cult spurred expansion of Saint Hill complex. This recently completed annex is "Castle Number Two."





Students examine clay figures, which are used to depict pre-clear's progress up through the various grades of Scientology.

to speak any word of disparagement of Scientology to the press or to listen to any condemnation of the cult. If the pre-clear's superiors think that he is guilty of any conduct "undertaken knowingly to suppress, reduce, or impede Scientology or Scientologists," he may find himself labeled a P.T.S.—potential trouble source—and charged with "high crimes." The penalty is dismissal from Scientology. Others in Scientology, who might presumably include his friends and/or members of his family, are instructed to "disconnect" from him.

However, the procedures used in Scientology auditing are easily obtained without imperiling any pre-clears. Hubbard goes into them in detail in his books.

The first step is to get a pre-clear "securely under the auditor's command." The pre-clear is required to answer very simple questions over and over again, or is ordered to move a small object around a table, starting it, stopping it, and changing its direction at the auditor's command. These exercises are carried on until the pre-clear responds to all questions and commands "quickly and accurately and without protest."

The auditor then begins to ask certain rather oddly worded questions, such as "Tell me something real," or "Can you not-know something about that person?" Following this confusing concept of "not-knowing," the pre-clear is led to deny the existence of objects around him. "The auditor should not be startled when, for the pre-clear, large chunks of the environment start to disap-

pear." But, Hubbard cautions, "the environment does not disappear for the auditor." This mind-numbing questioning is "continued for 25 hours or even 50 or 75 hours."

If the pre-clear shows a tendency to respond by bringing up some genuine current problem in his life, such tendencies are sternly cut off. "To a pre-clear who is worried about some present-time situation or problem," says Hubbard, "no other process has any greater effectiveness than the following one: The auditor, after a very *brief* discussion of the problem, asks the pre-clear to 'invent' a problem of comparable magnitude . . . If the pre-clear is unable to do this, it is necessary then to have him lie about the problem he has . . . After he has lied about the problem for a short time, he will be able to invent problems. He should be made to invent problem after problem until he is no longer concerned with his present-time problem."

Instead of discussing present reality, the auditor wishes to push the pre-clear into a world of fantasy. To help him, he uses a device called an E-meter, which consists of a meter and knobs mounted in a small housing. In the sessions, the auditor and pre-clear sit facing each other across a small table. The E-meter is placed on the table with its face visible to the auditor only. The pre-clear is given two tin cans to hold in his hands. The cans are attached to the E-meter by wires.

As the pre-clear answers the questions, the auditor watches the meter's needle. Certain movements of the needle supposedly mean that the pre-clear is suppressing something. The auditor "listens, computes, and commands," closing in relentlessly until the pre-clear comes up with the "suppressed information."

When the pre-clear is eager to cooperate, is fully under the sway of the auditor's will and the apparently scientific verdict of the E-meter, he accepts the auditor's statement that he is suppressing something, even if he can't remember anything. Sooner or later he begins to exhibit symptoms resembling those of schizophrenia. These symptoms are encouraged; the pre-clear is given to believe that the hallucinations he is experiencing are factual incidents of his thetan's past, and that his discovery of them is the high road to health and freedom. Hubbard has published numerous stories that pre-clears have told in Scientology auditing sessions about their thetans' past histories.

One pre-clear said that his thetan had inhabited the body of a doll on the planet Mars, 469,476,600 years ago. Martians seized the doll and took it to a temple, where it was zapped by a bishop's gun while the congregation chanted "God is Love." The thetan was then put into an ice cube, placed aboard a flying saucer, and dropped off at Planet ZX 432, where it was given a robot body, then put to work unloading flying saucers. Being a bit unruly, it zapped another robot to death, and was shipped off in a flying saucer to be punished. But the saucer exploded, and the thetan fell into space.

Another pre-clear recalled that he had been Mark Antony. He remembered Cleopatra, but she apparently had given him such a whopping engram that he couldn't recall the battles of Philippi and Actium.

A woman patient remembered that she had once

been a male lion that had gotten an engram by eating its keeper. This enlightening discovery, says Hubbard, cured her psychosis.

As each trauma in the thetan's past is "discovered," the auditor pushes the preclear for all the details he can supply. The event is then discussed until the pre-clear no longer reacts to it emotionally, and until there is no movement on the needle of the E-meter. The engram caused by the event has then been "flattened," or erased.

To anyone but a Scientologist, it need hardly be said that the E-meter cannot register, record, or assist the memory in recalling ray-gun zappings, Cleopatra's wiles, badly behaved lions, or other alleged incidents of one's past.

Far from being a triumphant product of space-age science, the E-meter is simply a Wheatstone bridge, a circuit that has been used in quack medical devices for decades. All its wiggling needle registers is the body's varying resistance to a current provided by a small battery. In its tax case against the Founding Church of Scientology, the government said that E-meters cost \$12.50 to build, and were sold to Scientology auditors for prices ranging from \$125 to \$144.

Hubbard and his followers have claimed that the E-meter could be used to detect and treat scores of human ills, from colds to cancer. In 1963, the U.S. government seized a number of the devices from the Washington Church of Scientology, charging that they were misbranded. The Scientology group contested the seizure. In the trial, held in April 1967, the jury returned a verdict for the government. The case is being appealed.

Scientologists now seem to be making fewer claims for the E-meter's effectiveness in treating physical ills, but its use for finding engrams continues in full swing.

Scientology makes an active attempt to lure people away from psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. "A Dianetic auditor can do more permanent good for a person than every psychologist and psychiatrist in the world wrapped up together," a Scientology official told a group of persons at a lecture I attended. A necessary condition for receiving Scientology processing, says a letter addressed to preclears by the Church of Scientology of California, is "nonreceipt of any other form of guidance, counsel, or treatment."

Scientologists are amused by the notion that long preparation may be needed to deal with human emotional problems. "A psychiatrist spends 16 years in school," a Scientology auditor told me with a grin. "We train a Dianetic auditor in 30 days." Scientologists are equally amused by the idea that different kinds of problems may require different kinds of treatment. "We use exactly the same process for each person," the Scientology auditor told me. "It is a science."

In fact, such sessions with nonprofessional personnel are likely to further confuse rather than help a psychologically disturbed person. In Australia, a government board of inquiry listened with dismay in an adjoining room as a Scientology auditor processed an emotionally upset woman. She floundered her way through the nightmarish session, then feebly said she felt it had helped her. Nine days later she was committed to a

mental hospital. The investigators discovered that other Scientology clients also had been turned over to mental institutions after processing.

In my visits to Scientology centers I encountered many enthusiastic persons who claimed that they had achieved fantastic progress in short periods of time through Scientology. They evinced total belief in the system. Their attitudes toward their auditors, toward persons running the Scientology centers, and above all, toward Ron Hubbard, bordered on reverence.

Such attitudes are familiar to every psychotherapist and psychoanalyst. In the early stages of treatment, the patient usually regards his analyst as a paragon of wisdom and knowledge. He also experiences what he believes are sweeping "insights," and feels that he is making dramatic progress.

One of the many fundamental differences between Scientology and psychotherapy is that a genuine therapist or analyst knows that these feelings are illusory, and that they must be transcended by the patient on his way to real emotional health. The analyst is not a god, a lawgiver, or a great discoverer, but a fallible human being. Genuine insight comes with painful slowness, and feelings of swift progress are nearly always a chimera.

By contrast, Scientology keeps the patient in this illusory state and exploits it for profit. Instead of being totally free, a clear is a person who believes totally in Scientology and who totally reveres Ron Hubbard. The clear feels, with happy certainty, that he now relates to the world with complete success.

But this view usually is not shared by the world. To his family and friends, the person who enters ever more deeply into Scientology seems to drift further and further from reality and to live more and more in the special in-group world that Scientology has created. Communication between converts and the rest of the world lapses and fails. The Scientologist believes that he is privy to exclusive truth, while everyone else suspects that he has gone over the deep edge.

In the summer of 1968 a furor arose in Great Britain about the ever-swelling flood of Americans coming to Saint Hill to be cleared. The British Ministry of Health received some 65 letters of complaint from disillusioned former Scientologists and from relatives and friends of persons who were actively involved in the cult. Matters came to a head when the Ministry learned that the Hubbard forces at Saint Hill were preparing to process children. While the authorities had no power to close down the operation, they barred Americans from coming to Britain on student visas to study at Saint Hill.

Scientology, warned British Health Minister Kenneth Robinson, is "socially harmful . . . Its authoritarian principles and practices are a potential menace to the personality of those so deluded as to become followers."

Shortly after this condemnation, Hubbard embarked on an extended Mediterranean cruise aboard his luxurious yacht. But his organization is still active.

Unfortunately, the numbers of those "so deluded" apparently are increasing. Before it finally goes the way of all cults, Scientology may leave behind a legacy of tragedy unmatched in the annals of fads and fallacies in mental health.

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