



Scientology : The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power

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Scientology devotes vast resources to squelching its critics. Since 1986 Hubbard and his church have been the subject of four unfriendly books, all released by small yet courageous publishers. In each case, the writers have been badgered and heavily sued. One of Hubbard's policies was that all perceived enemies are "fair game" and subject to being "tricked, sued or lied to or destroyed." Those who criticize the church -- journalists, doctors, lawyers and even judges -- often find themselves engulfed in litigation, stalked by private eyes, framed for fictional crimes, beaten up or threatened with death. Psychologist Margaret Singer, 69, an outspoken Scientology critic and professor at the University of California, Berkeley, now travels regularly under an assumed name to avoid harassment.

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After the Los Angeles Times published a negative series on the church last summer, Scientologists spent an estimated \$1 million to plaster the reporters' names on hundreds of billboards and bus placards across the city. Above their names were quotations taken out of context to portray the church in a positive light.

The church's most fearsome advocates are its lawyers. Hubbard warned his followers in writing to "beware of attorneys who tell you not to sue . . . the purpose of the suit is to harass and discourage rather than to win."

Result: Scientology has brought hundreds of suits

against its perceived enemies and today pays an estimated \$20 million annually to more than 100 lawyers.

One legal goal of Scientology is to bankrupt the opposition or bury it under paper. The church has 71 active lawsuits against the IRS alone. One of them, Miscavige vs. IRS, has required the U.S. to produce an index of 52,000 pages of documents. Boston attorney Michael Flynn, who helped Scientology victims from 1979 to 1987, personally endured 14 frivolous lawsuits, all of them dismissed. Another lawyer, Joseph Yanny, believes the church "has so subverted justice and the judicial system that it should be barred from seeking equity in any court." He should know: Yanny represented the cult until 1987, when, he says, he was asked to help church officials steal medical records to blackmail an opposing attorney (who was allegedly beaten up instead). Since Yanny quit representing the church, he has been the target of death threats, burglaries, lawsuits and other harassment.

Scientology's critics contend that the U.S. needs to crack down on the church in a major, organized way. "I want to know, Where is our government?" demands Toby Plevin, a Los Angeles attorney who handles victims. "It shouldn't be left to private litigators, because God knows most of us are afraid to get involved." But law-enforcement agents are also wary. "Every investigator is very cautious, walking on eggshells when it comes to the church," says a Florida police detective who has tracked the cult since 1988. "It will take a federal effort with lots of money and manpower."

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PETR DRULAK, director of the Institute of International Relations, on the Obama Administration's anticipated new proposal for Poland to jointly host an SM-3 missile system

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