Documentary Looks At Scientology -- Religion or Cult?

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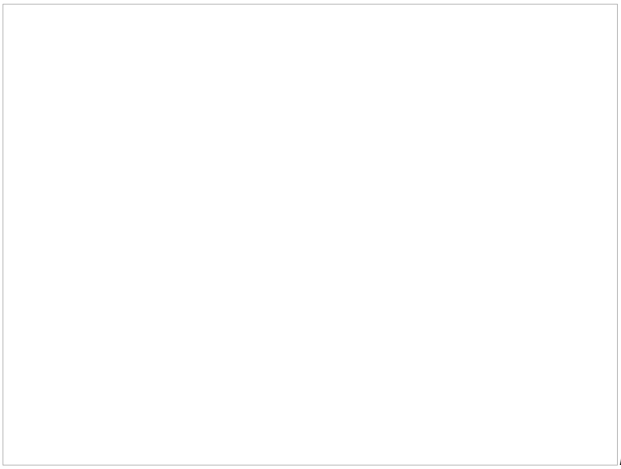

By RushPRnews staff writers

The God Conundrum: Scientology

LOS ANGELES CA (RPRN) 4/30/09--In the breakthrough documentary "Scientology: Inside the Cult" shot in the mid-90s, filmmakers in Britain explore a curiously growing religion based on the writings of a man known best for his works of fiction. A religion that many consider to be a cult. No doubt Scientology is sprouting up with a vengeance; especially with the helping hand of Hollywood star Tom Cruise, a devout Scientologist for the last 20 years. But he's not the only one. Actor Giovanni Ribisi and his sister Marissa are supposedly members of the church. "Dharma and Greg" actress Jenna Elfman is reportedly a follower. So is actress Leah Remini of the hit TV show, "The King of Queens." It is speculated that Juliette Lewis and Will Smith belong to the church. And the list goes on.

But what is it about this philosophy, if you will, that draws people in? Is it a cult? If so, who are its targets?

Armed with a hidden camera to record her findings, a journalist named Ally Davis learns how to outsmart even lie detector tests to safely make her way inside the esoteric archways of a religion that has swept Hollywood and beyond.

Upon arriving in London, Ally finds an undercover street petitioner drawing pedestrians into the Scientology office under the guise of a "personality survey," which is how most believers

are taken into the inner circle. After 40 minutes the petitioner admits to Ally that he works for the Church of Scientology. By this point, she has already followed him into their offices, a storefront where further tests are offered. Later, Ally will be prompted to spend thousands of pounds on tests, even prodded about inheritance money. She will undergo security checks and be arrested for stealing materials from the center. Turns out, Ally is not the only one with a camera.

The late Vaughn Young, L. Ron Hubbard's PR person for 20 years said this, "Hubbard literally had a plan for world conquest. He actually, literally wanted to take over the world. But he had to put it into other terms. And the term he came up with was to 'clear the planet.' And this sounds like a very beneficent action – we're going to clear the planet – which means rid it of its problems. But really it was more of a case like, like a Hitler that he wants to rid the planet of vermin. And the vermin are the people that are stopping him. And these were basically the enemies of Scientology."

During his lifetime, science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard claimed to be a nuclear physicist, explorer and war hero. Sunday Times journalist, Russell Miller exposed Hubbard's alleged facades in his book "Bare Faced Messiah."

"Ron Hubbard was a charlatan, a liar, a thief. He invented his whole life. He invented a career to substantiate himself as a guru for the Church of Scientology," Miller says.

In 1968 Hubbard was banned from Britain and went sailing. Hubbard and his followers went by the name, "The Sea Organization," running the religion from a ship for five years. This name would stick, later describing the group's most elite membership. After spending inordinate amounts of money, undercover journalist Ally Davis met members of this high-reaching sect of the church, where membership includes signing a "billion year contract."

When Ron Hubbard died in 1986, he left the Church of Scientology $650M, propelling it into the multi-million dollar empire it is now.

There are many allegations about how Scientology makes money off its members. Some of these tactics include mind exercises like staring into the eyes of another person for over an hour at a time; or exposing traumatic incidences to a ranking member of the church.

One former member of the Scientology claims that after a church-enforced exercise where he stared into the eyes of another member for an hour and a half, he was taken upstairs to a registrar and asked to sign over his bank information. At this point the church had permission to withdraw funds from his account. He declares the amount taken by the church exceeded $20,000.

Another technique is what Scientologists call "Auditing" where a member is forced to repeatedly

recount a traumatic event they have suffered to the exercise leader. This particular sequence caused the undercover journalist to feel “euphoric” and “high,” as though she had been released from something.

Cult expert Jim Siegelman asserts, “When they are shutting down the mind systematically, when they are shutting down emotions systematically, people will experience a kind of ecstasy by default as we call it. There will be a release of some kind of a pressure and they will feel this as a psychological high.”

While on this ‘high’ journalist Ally Davis is taken to buy more courses.
She reports that sessions are also held late at night, after the center has closed.

Siegelman and his wife have studied cults for over 20 years. He contends that Scientology has the worst long term effects. “People who come out of this group report to us very high levels of amnesia, memory loss, of insomnia, of disorientation, of hallucinations and delusions, of perceptions of bewildering psychic experiences that will plague them…for up to 12 years after they leave the group.”

One member claims he experienced “suicidal depression” while trying to leave Scientology. Even founder L. Ron Hubbard’s son has left the church after being second in command for ten years, claiming his father was a “liar,” and that the main interest was money.

For a group that independent cult experts claim has the most “effective” recruiting tactics and the most damaging effects on its members, one can’t help but wonder: what are the plusses? People like John Travolta and his wife Kelly Preston, Kirstie Alley and even the late Sonny Bono have been influenced by the teachings of Scientology. Kirstie Alley concedes that “without Scientology, I would be dead.”

Discovering the benefits of this fairly new belief system, however, is challenging. Scientology claims “it improves life in a troubled world.” An interesting assessment considering that they “do not approve of open discussions” of their beliefs (referred to as “technologies”) according to reports. Alternately, the church keeps excruciatingly detailed information on their members, forcing them to reveal all sexual encounters and anything prospective members feel is noteworthy, embarrassing, or moreover, indicting. This information, it has been alleged, is later used by the church to harass, humiliate, or worse, blackmail those that decide to leave the group.

According to the documentary, Scientology regards journalists as enemies, as “suppressive people” who they are “against.” The church also encourages members to “do anything necessary to destroy, deter or discredit” their critics, as part of what’s called the “Fair Game Doctrine.” Perhaps then, some more digging will be necessary to find out just what, exactly, the lure is. In the meantime ponder this…In the words of the late Lafayette Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, “If you want to make a little money, write a book. If you want to make a lot of money,

create a religion.”

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