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Citation: 14 Rutgers J. L. & Religion 306 2012-2013



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# SECTS, CULTS, AND THE ATTACK ON JURISPRUDENCE<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the anti-judicial doctrines and actions of various religious and religiously-related sects and cults in the United States and Canada. When these groups reject the “rules of the legal game,” they then follow their own laws, including ones about legal procedures and decorum. These self-established procedures and their related court decorum easily translate into outright hostility toward the law and those who enforce it. Moreover, once they are operational, some sects and cults develop or acquire professionals (such as lawyers, police, and other law enforcement personnel) whose commitments to the welfare of clients may conflict with their own loyalties to their respective groups. Widespread in North America, for example, are variations of the “Sovereign Citizens” movement, whose members have delegitimized federal, state, and provincial governments and who act aggressively toward law enforcement and court officials. Using different tactics, Scientology has abused the law to harass opponents, including opposing counsel and presiding judges. Most serious are cases of attempted murder and homicide against police, lawyers, judges, and other law enforcement personnel. The type and range of cultic-based or sectarian-motivated acts of aggression against people in the legal system coincides with growing safety concerns for their welfare throughout North America for reasons not related to sectarianism or religious violence.

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1. First author Kent presented a version of this article as the keynote address at the Law Review Banquet and Silent Auction on March 10, 2010. Both authors extend their appreciation to Val Campbell, Ann Normand, Alan Schefflin, and Andrea Willey for their comments and suggestions.