

Scientology Inc.:

The religion that is in business

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Introduction

There are conflicting views on whether Scientology is a religion or a business. There are aspects of it which support the Scientologists beliefs that it is a religion and other aspects which support critics' views that it is not a religion but a business. Religion is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, in the form of a personal God or gods. Business is a person, partnership, or corporation engaged in commerce, manufacturing, or a service; profit-seeking enterprise or concern. The members of Scientology believe that its purpose is truly religious and it was founded on the purpose of bettering the lives of others with these beliefs. However many have heard the scandals of Scientology and question its true purpose. The views of the founder, the way of their "religious" services, their use of celebrity endorsement and a current ruling, make it hard to see the Church of Scientology as religion but easier to see it as a business.

The founder wanted money.

Lafayette Ronald Hubbard is portrayed by the Church of Scientology as having lived life to the fullest; having been unmatched when it comes to loyalty and success; having witnessed and obtained much wisdom; and having been an intelligent man who helped bring science and religion together (L. Ron Hubbard Founder of Dianetics and Scientology, n.d.). These statements may be true,

however Hubbard was not as great a man as he is portrayed. It was not his goal to better the lives of others; his goal was to better his own life. Hubbard was a greedy man who sought power and money. In 1946, John Parsons and L. Ron Hubbard had gone into a business partnership together. Parsons invested \$17,000, Hubbard invested \$10,000. However, it was said that Hubbard spent about all he put in to the partnership on a yacht, while Parsons was struggling to make ends meet (Cooper, 1997). He showed to be more absorbed with personal materialistic concerns than his relationships. Moreover, his mindset did not change even as years passed. In 1949, L. Ron Hubbard had said to Lloyd Eshbach: "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is" (Hubbard in His Own Words, n.d.). A year later he published his novel, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. It seemed as if overnight the money had flowed in. That is when he brought science and religion together to make Scientology (Mordecai, n.d.). Hubbard saw the excellent business opportunity right in front of his eyes. Even Hubbard's own son confirmed that Hubbard had established Scientology as a religion instead of a science because the law had less strict standards for religions, and even more appealing to Hubbard were the tax advantages and tax exemptions for religions (Cooper, 1997).

Religious or business services?

Weekly services, marriage ceremonies, funerals, baptisms are all common happenings in a church. The Church of Scientology also has these services, but the way in which they are executed seems to be very odd.

The Church of Scientology does offer Sunday services, however they seem rather different from other religions' weekly services. In the Church of Scientology Ceremonies book it is stated that a service must have "dignity and order", however it followed by saying how it does not have to be "solemn and reverent". In fact, the services do not require and seldom include any quote from a religious book of beliefs. (Cooper, 1997). However since 1999, there has been increased quotation and sermons (Melton, n.d.). The Church of Scientology often offers services outdoors in the summer at public locations, such as Central Park in Manhattan. These outdoor services end up being more a pitch for Scientology; a means to further promote to the public (Cooper, 1997). These characteristics seem to add up to an event that more resembles a business meeting or outing than a religious gathering.

The Church of Scientology also offers marriage ceremonies. There are many different ceremonies ranging in formality (What is the Scientology Wedding Ceremony?, n.d.). A common choice is the double ring marriage ceremony, this was the ceremony chosen for the Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes wedding (Callaway, n.d.). The ceremonies may be filled with love because of

the couples' genuine feelings but the ceremony seems, on the other hand, quite cold. At the most romanticized moment of the ceremony, the "I dos", the ceremony seems to take a less intimate route:

(Minister to the Groom) Are you ready to accept this woman as your wife?

(Groom) Thank you.

(Minister to the Bride) Are you ready to accept this man as your husband?

(Bride) Thank you.

This point of the wedding is more like a business partnership agreement than a matrimonial moment (Cooper, 1997).

In a baptism ceremony, the thetan, the one being baptized, is introduced to their own body and the bodies of their parents and their godparents. At the end, the thetan is thanked for his participation in the ceremony (Cooper, 1997). This is quite similar to a business interview or presentation where you would introduce yourself and tell a small fact about yourself to break the ice, and once it comes time to go you thank them for their time and how it was nice to meet them (Tharp, 2013).

Many of these common services offered for the members of the Church of Scientology seem to have less of a religious aspect to their execution and more of a business approach.

Those of a “potentially higher spiritual level”.

Many businesses get celebrities to be endorsers and investors.

Scientology has adopted this same concept.

The recognition of the benefit of celebrities came as early as 1955 when Hubbard introduced “Project Celebrity”. This was the idea that the church should collect certain individuals like trophies. Hubbard had even written a list of suitable individuals to acquire and whoever attracted those individuals would receive a plaque. This list included individuals such as Ernest Hemingway, Howard Hughes and Walt Disney. Although this was not carried out exactly the way Hubbard had intended, the concept lives on (Sappell, 1990).

The Church of Scientology has targeted celebrities to join in order to gain greater acceptance and be more attractive to the mainstream public in order to further the amount of donations. In order to acquire as many celebrities as they have, they made Scientology look incredibly appealing for celebrities. They built extravagant, sumptuous centers that are distinctly for celebrities (Urban). The Church of Scientology has also created a magazine, *Celebrity*, which features a famous scientologist on the cover of every issue (Goodyear, 2008). These are features that attracted many, however there are many non-tangible features of being a celebrity who belongs to the church that attracted the majority of these wealthy celebrities. Consider, it is said that celebrities are on a “potentially higher spiritual level” than those of a less influential class.

Furthermore, the Church of Scientology likes to boost the egos of their celebrities and reassure them that it is satisfactory to be famous and wealthy, as these are people who aren't interested in more money, they want spiritual confirmation (Urban). Is spiritual confirmation the Church of Scientology's swag bag equivalent?

There are also many whom defend Scientology's use of celebrities, stating how the United Nations uses Angelina Jolie, and Amnesty International uses Sting, however this argument is irrelevant because these organizations are not religions and still have the focus of obtaining your money, even if it is for a good cause (Shaw, 2008). You don't see the Jewish Synagogue or the Roman Catholic Church using celebrity endorsement.

The celebrities that currently being used as the spokesmen for Scientology are Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kirstie Alley and many others who claim to love and benefit from Scientology. Why wouldn't you be willing to be a spokesman for an organization that is constantly singing your praises? John Travolta even credits his confidence and direction in life to Scientology (Sappell, 1990). However who is really benefiting? These celebrities who have found their direction in life or the Church of Scientology, which has become a \$1.2 billion dollar industry because of the donations and endorsement of these celebrities?

Anti-SLAPP in the face.

Through the years Scientology has been through many court cases for rulings of status as a religion. Some countries have granted Scientology a religious classification, others a cult status, or a business, some remain undecided. In Canada, Scientology still has not obtained an official status. In the United States it is recognized as a religion however many do not agree as it has always had a business itinerary. Judge Dip Waldrip recognizes this business mindset.

On March 14th, 2014, Texas Judge Dip Waldrip had denied Scientology's "anti-SLAPP" motion against the harassment lawsuit of Marty and Monique Rathbun. However it is interesting that the reason he rejected the "anti-SLAPP" motion was Waldrip found that Scientology's testimony presented that it had instigated the campaign against Marty Rathbun as a defensive tactic in a trademark quarrel. As a business dispute, the "anti-SLAPP" motion is not considered (Ortega, 2014).

In his 25 page ruling Judge Waldrip makes statements which exemplify Scientology as a business. Waldrip stated on page 14: "the Court concludes that a preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that CSI and its agents are 'primarily engaged in the business of selling or leasing goods or services'" (Anti-SLAPP of All Defendants Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law & Ruling Denying All Anti-SLAPP Motions to Dismiss, 2014). As you read

further he states how other courts have come to the same result. Waldrip also makes reference to how the church has a fixed donation, otherwise known as a price, for their auditing sessions as being part of the facts which lead to this ruling. The Church of Scientology may be viewed as a religion in the United States but this Judge was determined to bring to life the objectives of the Church of Scientology that seem to be more business-like than religiously based (Ortega, 2014).

Conclusion

We have seen through L. Ron Hubbard's lust for profit, the services of Scientology, the want and use of celebrities and a current ruling in Texas that the Church of Scientology cannot be fully, one hundred percent, classified as a religion. Even more, the Church of Scientology seems to even have more business-like qualities than religious. Based on all the facts available, it is more reasonable to conclude that Scientology can be better described as a business than a religion.

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