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English II Honors

3 December 2021

Context Essay

The uprising of Scientology in the 1950s was a result of its creator, L. Ron Hubbard, who brought the institution to life through his published works. Of these works that were produced by Hubbard, who (for future reference) had no experience from science/religious-based schooling during this time, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* is considered to be his earliest proposal of Scientology. The book suggests that “humans are kept from achieving their true potential due to "engrams," which are traumatic mental images stored in a person's memory” (*Scientology*). The book then goes on to further entice its readers by claiming it can teach people how to resolve engrams and grossly improve the mental and spiritual aspects of their lives, otherwise describing “a program of self improvement. ” (*Scientology*). Hubbard’s *Dianetics* isn’t his only work that promoted Scientology either. Being the motivated writer that Hubbard was, he wrote nearly 100,000 words a month and published 599 other books, producing a prosperous outcome of which over 27 million copies of Hubbard's nonfiction collection were sold, a collection that consisted of many Scientology works (*L. Ron Hubbard*). Despite a lack of evidence concerning the credibility of Hubbard’s books, the long term effects of this success is determined to have popularized Scientology and allowed it to reach recognition in places besides the U.S. like Australia, Russia, and Spain, all of which are countries that have/had adopted

Scientology into their borders and further stimulated Scientology's presence in society, helping to ignite a growing following for it that remains today

Along with the arrival of Scientology into society in the mid 20th century, the qualification of a "cult" was drastically changing during this time and the Christian countercult movement was becoming increasingly popular. This movement grouped religious sects that Christian ministries deemed unethical, and referred to them as "cults". As Scientology rose in numbers after its creation, it was not long before it too was given the title of cult. This designation is largely associated with Scientology even today, and to the churches dismay, its legacy as a scientific institution began to show significant change that greatly differed from its original intentions. No longer was the church claiming to have "scientific roots", which are indicated but not claimed in the Scientology Handbook, a rulebook for participants of the church, that states "Almost incidentally, this new science [Dianetics] resolves many of the problems of the human mind and human body which have been resistive.", referring to the practices established within Scientology and their pursuit of scientific advancement (Hubbard 3). It's important to note that many subjects covered by Hubbard's original texts reviewed very similar topics as many religions at the time. The ideas of both self improvement and residual trauma are no stranger to religious culture, leading to the eventual transition from science to religion, fueled by the desire to receive the legal benefits a religious title would grant the church. Among these benefits, the church was especially interested in the promise of tax exemption.

The self-proclaimed "battle against the IRS" plagued Scientology for its first 25 years of existence. During this period of time, the IRS, or international revenue service, declared Scientology a "commercial enterprise", which did not include the tax-exempt status religious institutions were granted. To everyone's surprise, however, on October 8th 1993, every

Scientology entity within the United States was granted the title of legal religion. This was not only a shocking turn of events as it saved a widely debated organization who had collected over 2,500 lawsuits and tens of millions of dollars in taxes, but also served heavily as a public relations tool for the church itself. On the surface, the State Department formally justified their decision as a direct response to Germany's "discrimination" against the church. This ruling referenced Germany's final decision to treat Scientology a business, not a tax-exempt religion, and the United States had followed in their footsteps for the previous 25 years (Frantz).

Unknown to everyone, this revelation was due also due to a string of carefully organized events orchestrated by the church against the revenue service. An investigation done by the *New York Times* uncovered numerous accounts of Scientology hiring investigators to spy on IRS officials in an attempt to uncover potential vulnerabilities. In addition, an unusual meeting between IRS Commissioner Goldberg and church leader Miscavige was documented to have taken place where they eventually made a compromise on the church's standing with the revenue service. The exact terms of this agreement were undocumented, but are rumored to have been concerning the lawsuits attached to the church at this time. This meeting resulted in the creation of a committee to find a negotiation between the IRS and church, where this committee finally ruled that the church met the qualifications to receive tax-exempt status. Tax officials were ordered to ignore pre-existing rules when reviewing terms and conditions concerning the decision. "In interviews, senior Scientology officials and the IRS denied that the church's aggressive tactics had any effect on the agency's decision. They said the ruling was based on a two-year inquiry and voluminous documents that showed the church was qualified for the exemptions." (Frantz). As a result of the ruling, Scientology's newly-found religious status secured its freedom to avoid prosecution and investigation under the First Amendment.

Assembled by the Founding Fathers of United States, the First Amendment of the U.S. constitution embodies within it the enforcement of “*no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*”, branding the implementation of law rejecting these policies to be a malpractice of governmental authority(Volokh). Although this form of doctrine was adopted into American society as early as the late 1700s, its presence does not cease to exist in current legislature, and “in particular, from the 1920s to the ’40s the Supreme Court applied all the clauses of the First Amendment to the states. Thus, the First Amendment [*now*] covers actions by federal, state, and local governments.”(Volokh). In correlation to Scientology’s protection under the First Amendment today and at the time of its arrival, this amendment ultimately is shown to constitute a state of neutrality between the church (Scientology) and state, for as long as Scientology identifies as a religious institution, the government cannot participate in the affairs of Scientology (*First Amendment: Religion and Expression* 978). While this may be true, it is only true to a certain extent. As stated in the GPO documents regarding freedom of expression and speech, “Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa.”(*First Amendment: Religion and Expression* 978). In other words, the government can intervene in the case of any given religious organization violating the terms of the amendment, suggesting laws concerning this amendment have been proven not only to inhibit a lack of debate between government officials and Scientology, but also an avoided, share consensus in which the government can intervene under circumstances that do not always have to concern direct and religious proclamation(s) made by the Church of Scientology. This form of legislature can be seen in court cases such as *Hubbard v.*

United States, a case regarding “false statements and similar misconduct occurring in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States.” or addressing Scientology’s attempts to spy on the IRS unsolicitedly (*Hubbard v. United States* 619).

This ongoing conflict between the church of Scientology and the American legal system has yielded minimal results within America's internal affairs. As the struggle of the church against the law continues to persist, there will always be debate within religious politics concerning them. Many laws have attempted to pass in recent years concerning scientology specifically, but “the separation of church and state mandated by the first amendment has discouraged legislation in this area” (Lewis). Only if the first amendment does not have such a gravity on legislature, or scientology's religious title is removed, will any progress be made concerning the church.

Scientology has continued to encourage a changing view of what defines a cult, not only to American citizens but also other nations. Especially within the European nation, many countries have criticized America's political decisions regarding scientology. Diplomacy has been widely used between these countries to influence one another regarding how the church should be treated, and what their status should be within each nation. Many countries such as France and Germany have limited the amount of information they pull from the United States regarding human rights issues in religious bodies for this very reason. For other nations, such as Russia, they have banned the church entirely, severing contact with the states concerning the issue all together, at least on a public scale (Kent). How cults will be handled on a governmental scale throughout the world has, and will continue to be a direct reflection of the conflict seen between the Church of Scientology and the American government.

