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Unorthodox Scientologists don't get fair treatment

I'm not a Scientologist, but I find the recent \$39 million jury verdict in Portland against the Church of Scientology deeply disturbing. Last year Rev. Sun Myung Moon was jailed for doing what Catholic archbishops do all the time — holding church property in his own name — and now Scientology loses a court case for practicing its pastoral counseling technique. These attacks on controversial religions must stop.

Plaintiff Julie Christofferson Titchbourne, 27, was awarded the \$39 million judgment on claims that the church charged her money for pastoral counseling and fraudulently asserted it could improve her eyesight, intelligence and creativity. The jury agreed. I think the jury failed to understand what Scientology is and believes. For example, one juror said after the trial that he was swayed most by evidence concerning Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. "The most compelling thing was L. Ron Hubbard himself and how the whole organization is geared to exactly what he wants to do and how he wants them to do it." What does that have to do with Titchbourne's charges? Don't Christian churches do exactly what Jesus wants? Don't Islamics faithfully adhere to the Prophet?

The constitutional question: Is Scientology a legitimate religion or a money-making fraud? Is its pastoral counseling technique a religious or a secular activity? In answering those questions Scientology labors under the burden of unfamiliarity: How many classics of Scientology have you read? I've read a few and find Scientology to be non-traditional but thoroughly religious.

SCIENTOLOGY is based upon specific answers to questions that have been recognized as religious since the dawn of history: How did the universe get here? What is the nature of the soul? Are we immortal? What is spiritual improvement? How should we treat our fellow humans? Scientology's

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answers are unorthodox but profound.

Where does Scientology say the universe came from? Life created it. Ah, but not life *organisms*, for *The Axioms of Scientology* — an intellectual feast — defines life thus: "Axiom 1: Life is basically a static. Definition: a Life Static has no mass, no motion, no wave-length, no location in space or in time. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive."

You see? A "Life Static" is immaterial, something like the Tao or a spirit. Unorthodox but very religious. And this spirit has great power, enough to create the material universe. As *Axiom 3* states: "Space, energy, objects, form and time are the result of considerations made and/or agreed upon or not by the static, and are perceived solely because the static considers that it can perceive them." In short, spirit created the universe.

Every individual is in essence a "Life Static"; the human spirit is thus immortal, living life after death after life, a teaching you can find in the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita* (II, 22-23): "As a man casts off his worn-out clothes/And takes on other new ones,/So does the embodied soul cast off his worn-out bodies/And enters others new." As with most religions, Scientology's answers raise new questions.

ONE OF its answers is crucial to the Titchbourne

case: The human mind is not the brain, it is mental images created by each human spirit. (In Scientology you are a spirit that has a body, not the other way around.) One's mental images contain all perceptions, sight, sound, pain, sex, everything, the whole record of human life. Mental images can get out of control, particularly those containing pain, and come back to make us behave irrationally.

Scientology views its pastoral counseling as one spirit helping another to recover control of those mental images and other facets of one's life, which might make you see better, get smarter and be more creative. A simple example of one Scientology technique can be experienced by most people: Call up a mental image of some neutral object, then send a continuous stream of any communication to it, lots of "hellos" or "OKs" or whatever, out loud or silently. The mental image will fade and vanish. You can bring it back again and again, but communication will dissolve it every time. Think of the implications. And think what a blessing that simple technique might be to a grieving widow obsessed with an ever-present image of her deceased spouse in his coffin.

So you see, Scientology pastoral counseling is a totally spiritual religious activity. To a Scientologist, the "E-meter" — a lie-detector-like device so celebrated by the press — measures spiritual states, a useful indicator for one human spirit helping another, it's not a "therapeutic machine" as the ignorant have claimed.

The fact that people pay donations for this counseling does not make it commercial. Every religious organization must have money. Wealth is not a measure of fraud. If it were, what would that make of the Mormons or Catholics? The only First Amendment question is: is it a genuine religion? Scientology is. All else is irrelevant. Attacks on it and other unorthodox religions must stop.

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