

Even Scientology Has Schisms

David N. Green, 2015

Scientology is a relatively new religion. In its early days, from the mid-1950s through the 1960s, its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, was still developing core rites, rituals and practices. The article on Scientology, entitled "Schisms and Sects", from the Patheos online media company, at www.patheos.com, describes how early adherents were not happy or at least in-line with the evolution, and tried to take their own paths. This paper will offer a précis and commentary on the article.

Hubbard's book entitled "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health", published in 1950, was what started the original movement. Shortly after its release, people began applying its teachings through organized groups that were not part of Hubbard's own Foundation. These initial "religious" differences would seem to have been simply due to lack of a formal religion. As Hubbard evolved Dianetics into Scientology, more formally establishing and promoting the idea of reaching a level of mental condition referred to as Clear, other groups mostly dissolved.

In the 1960's Hubbard continued to add new goals for adherents to achieve, in the form of what are called Operating Thetan levels. Many broke from the Church due to these changes, and continued to promote and apply the previously existing teachings on their own. The religious differences were perhaps more strident this time, and Hubbard shut down most of these splinter organizations using legal remedies related to trademarks on his material.

One splinter group that survived beyond the effort to quash offshoots was led by Jack Horner, a former colleague of Hubbard in Scientology. This new movement was first called Dianology, but eventually became known as Eductivism. It incorporated ideas from Scientology and elsewhere. While it saw notable success in the 1970s and 1980s, its popularity declined to only one centre of study, in California, by the late 1990s. Perhaps this movement was different enough from Scientology to be left alone.

The Church of Scientology continues to aggressively pursue anyone it perceives to be distorting its teachings, using similar legal means that Hubbard had used in the early decades of the movement. It is interesting to contrast that while internal-group religious differences in the past, and even in many cases in the present, are dealt with using violence and war, at least one modern religion seems to have embraced litigation as their primary method to preserve the integrity of faith.