

Scientology Growing Despite Brushes With FDA

By GEORGE W. CORNELL
AP Religion Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — An unmodern-made religion, the Church of Scientology is going strong today, in followers, facilities and systematic financing. But it also is having to fight recurrent government interference for the right to pursue its methods.

"The road has been rocky," says the Rev. Kenneth J. Whitman, of the organization's Los Angeles headquarters. "But we keep growing because we're helping people."

Incorporated just 16 years ago, under direction of its founder, the iconoclastic American scientist-thinker L. Ron Hubbard, the church now claims three million participants in this country, 10 million worldwide.

"We promise results, and if we weren't delivering them we wouldn't have any parishioners," the Rev. Mr. Whitman said in an interview. "We've found something that works."

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The religion is an eclectic mixture of mainly Eastern philosophical ideas and applied Western techniques aimed at making the individual more effective through awareness of himself as an immortal soul-called a Thetan.

HIT WITH government restrictions in England and Australia, the church also is involved in a drawn-out legal battle against the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for forcibly seizing a truckload of the church's scriptures and counselling aids.

"The FDA wants to burn our scriptures and destroy our religion," the Rev. Mr. Whitman said. "It's a struggle we must win for the freedom of our faith."

After varied court rulings over an eight-year period, and another hearing this week, the case now awaits a decision by the U.S. District Court in Washington.

Several traditional religious agencies, although not endorsing the group's tenets, have condemned the govern-

ment action as an attack on religious freedom.

Unorthodox in its doctrines. "It's an application of principles," said the Rev. Arthur J. Maren, also of the Los Angeles "mother church."

THE MAIN BELIEFS are simply that God exists, that man is inherently good and that he attains his full potentiality through clearing away falacious, negative impressions and realizing himself as essentially an immortal spirit.

This assertedly is done through "auditing" directed questioning and listening — of a "preclear" person to take him back over his "time track" to free him of harmful, encumbering previous experiences and anxieties so that he gradually becomes a "clear," affirming his true, competent being.

In conducting these sessions, trained "auditors" or counsellors use an electrometer — E-Meter — a small, battery-powered mechanism resembling an ordinary lie detector, with ex-

tension cords held by subjects during the sessions, with an indicator needle seen only by the auditor registering reactions.

"We look on it as a barometer of the spirit," said the Rev. Mr. Maren. "It enables us to find areas of spiritual stress more quickly. But it has nothing whatever to do with diagnosing or healing bodily ills."

NEVERTHELESS, the FDA acted against Scientology on the contention that the E-Meter is a "device" about which false claims were made in regard to healing.

To the contrary, Scientology officially states that the E-Meter has no effect on mind or body, but the church does consider it useful and religiously valuable, somewhat as Christianity views the bread and cup of Holy Communion.

"At stake is the issue of whether the government has regulatory power over the use of religious artifacts," the Rev. Mr. Whitman said.

In earlier phases of the case, which grew out of the 1963 seizure of about two tons of church books and about 100 E-Meters, the U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled that Scientology is "a bonafide religion."

Since the litigation began, the church has grown from its small beginnings to its present widespread operations, with churches in 19 major U.S.

cities, 90 smaller missions, about 300 ordained clergymen and branches in 38 other countries.

PARISHIONERS in the nonprofit institution pay fixed fees, starting with a basic \$15, one-week course and ranging up to longer advanced courses

at \$300 to \$875. Most income goes into expanding operations, the spokesmen said, while small percentages go to the U.S. headquarters and to the world headquarters at Saint Hill Manor in East Grinstead, Sussex, England.

There, a woman, Jane Kember, serves as world guardian, appointed for life by Hubbard. However, a British immigration ruling has barred foreign Scientologists, including Americans — a ruling being challenged, as is an Australian law banning Scientology.

Each country where Scientology operates has a deputy guardian, a post filled in this country by the Rev. Robert Thomas of Los Angeles. Hubbard himself now spends his time on a private ship, the Apollo, with about 50 followers, doing research.

Scientology runs several free centers for rehabilitating drug addicts. It sharply criticizes psychiatry on grounds that it fails to take into account man's basic spiritual nature.