

New Religion Takes on U.S. Government, Psychiatry

An aggressive modern religion that has taken on the U.S. government and the psychiatric profession has come to the Peninsula.

The Church of Scientology, which established a study group here last August, has now opened a counseling center at 604 Lighthouse Ave., Monterey.

Still a mission of the San Francisco church, the local congregation is training a minister and conducting lectures and personal counseling sessions.

Court Fight

The church, founded only 16 years ago, has been engaged in a court fight since 1963 to recover its property seized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

In addition, Scientology is attacking psychiatry because of its failure to recognize that man is a spiritual being, says the Rev. Vaughn Young, assistant guardian of the San Francisco church.

"The fight with psychiatry is a fight for the spirit of man," says Rev. Young, who is working with the fledgling Peninsula organization.

"Man is an immortal spiritual being, a creation of God, and shouldn't be treated like a piece of meat."

He added that "some psychiatrists think a spiritual viewpoint is a sign of mental illness."

The battle with the FDA began in 1963 when a group of Baltimore longshoremen, who had been deputized, were escorted by motorcycle policemen to the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington and to the residences of its ministers.

Seized Property

The men entered the church without warning while services were being held and seized two truckloads of church property.

Included were "E-meters," which the FDA said were healing devices but which the church said were "confessional aids," and literature, which the FDA said was "labeling" to make false healing claims for the "E-meters" but which the church described as "scriptures."

The raids were made with a warrant, but church officials said there were no affidavits at-

tached by anyone who had complained against the church.

In the court action which followed, the U.S. Court of Appeals finally ruled in 1969 that the Church of Scientology is "a bonafide religion."

Despite the ruling, the FDA continued to press its case, and another ruling is pending in a civil case filed in U.S. District Court in Washington.

Unorthodox in its approach, Scientology stresses techniques rather than doctrines. The main beliefs are that God exists and man is good, attaining his full potential by clearing away fallacious impressions and realizing himself as an immortal spirit.

Roots in Buddhism

"We are an all-denominational religion, with our roots in Buddhism," Rev. Young explains. "Many who come into our church had no previous religious background, but those who did can keep their previous beliefs."

The controversial electrometer, or "E-meter," is a small battery-powered mecha-

nism resembling a lie detector, which is used during counseling sessions to locate areas of "spiritual stress."

"We look on it as a barometer of the spirit," said one church leader. "It enables us to find areas of spiritual stress more quickly, but it has nothing to do with diagnosing or healing bodily ills."

Founded in 1955

Founded in 1955 by Lafayette Hubbard, a 60-year-old author-explorer who goes under the name of L. Ron Hubbard, the church now claims 3 million adherents in the United States and 10 million throughout the world.

Of these, 300 reside on the Peninsula, according to Bob Zeltzer, director of public relations and promotion for the local fellowship.

Since the FDA raid, the then-small organization has grown to 19 churches in major American cities, 90 missions in smaller cities, and some 300 ordained clergymen. There are branches in 38 other countries.

Lives on Ship

Hubbard now spends his time on a private ship, the Apollo, with about 50 followers doing research. He has appointed for life a "world guardian," Jane Kember, who lives in the world headquarters at Saint Hill Manor in England.

Each country where Scientology operates has a "deputy guardian," a post filled in this country by the Rev. Robert Thomas of Los Angeles.

The Peninsula mission, called the Dianetic Counseling Center, has no religious services in the conventional sense but has regularly scheduled lectures, including a taped discourse by Hubbard on Sunday afternoons.

The staff of 12 includes six who are fulltime, according to the director, Mrs. Leslie Gardner.



(Herald photo)

Conferring

From left to right, Mrs. Leslie Gardner, director, and Bob Zeltzer, promotion manager for the Peninsula mission of the Church of Scientology, confer with the Rev. Vaughn Young, assistant guardian of the San Francisco church.

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