

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF., U.S.A.

2 SEPT 1976

Thurs., Sept. 2, 1976 * * S.F. EXAMINER—Page 29

Television

Bill Mandel



The righteousness hustle

The ABC News Closeup "New Religions: Holiness or Heresy?" which will air at 10 tonight on Channel 7 (KGO) represents a frightening erosion of journalistic standards and values.

The title of the program promises a look on a spiritual level at the ideas, such as they may be, underlying some of America's new religious-philosophical wrinkles. Instead, the program labors for an hour in very secular ways to prove what a thinking person might agree to before an argument—that deeply-held religious belief can lead to gullibility and fanaticism.

"Holiness or Heresy?" has chosen to focus on two current "fad" religions, Scientology and the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Both of these belief systems invite close analysis and explanation. I, for one, would love to know what force could yank a typical American middle-class youngster away from home, school and normal social development and turn him or her into no more than a beggar, trying any story to eadge money from strangers on filthy street corners for Rev. Moon. I've read a lot of print stories on Moon and his ways, but TV offers a special chance for person-to-person communication. What does Moon really say to these kids?

That, however, is not the aim of "Holiness or Heresy?" Rather, the show chugs along at the lowest level of journalism's arsenal—the smear by association. We are told that Moon, a wealthy Korean industrialist who, like many business tycoons, has been bitten by the God bug, is tied intimately to South Korean dictator Park Chung Hee, and the implication is made that the whole Church is a front for a pro-Park propaganda machine.

ABC must consider objectivity, or at least its appearance, vestigial. Because correspondent-narrator Jim Kincaid says flat-out, "Moon uses religion as a shield for his military and political aims. His Unification Church is a political organization contributing to Moon's personal wealth and the aims of South Korea."

I am no sympathizer of Moon's. In fact, his clean-cut sales minions are the only ones I refuse to buy junk from on the street, because they will tell any lie just to get money. But thousands of American youngsters have left their normal lives to give everything, literally, to Moon. Is a TV journalist fulfilling his mandate by rehashing old, well-known information that the would-be Messiah is well-connected to his government? I think not.

As long as we're discussing questions I'd like to see answered on "Holiness or Heresy?," why didn't the producer, Tony Batten, ponder this thought: When a young woman renounces the world to enter a convent, it's a happy occasion; when a young woman does the same for Moon, it's a tragedy, something worth hiring a paid kidnaper over. Why? And weren't the early Christians wild-eyed zealots, doing very extreme things to protect themselves from persecution, as today's new cultists perceive themselves as doing? We get no hint on this program, which is a wasted opportunity, a damn shame.

And as for the Scientology segment, Kincaid labors long to prove that Scientology is just another dance lesson con, a weird system of bogus ideas, backed up by specious technical gadgets, all aimed at getting the unwary to buy more lessons.

—10:00 P.M.—

- ①—News: Hambrick-Richmond
- ②—10—Sarnady Jones: Betty becomes personally involved in a murder inquiry is investigating when the suspect turns out to be a man she once loved (repeat)
- ③—11-13—ABC News Closeup: "New Religions — Holiness or Heresy?" Examination of why young people are increasingly attracted to new religions; focusing on the Unification Church founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and the Church of Scientology, started by L. Ron Hubbard (60 min.)

Churches Cry 'Foul' As ABC Gets 'Closeup'

Having won a law suit against it that sought to enjoin playing the "Closeup" docu "New Religions: Holiness Or Heresy" last Thursday (2), ABC-TV is now facing a Fairness Doctrine demand from one of the two religions looked at, plus a threatened lawsuit.

The injunction request was filed by supporters of the Church of Scientology in Los Angeles on the grounds that the show produced by ABC News would be "an invasion of privacy." It was also by ABC News v.p. of docu Marlene Sanders that web affils had received wires telling them that their licenses would be in danger if they used the program.

After the show appeared, the second of the two groups profiled, the Unification Church, headed by

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Churches Cry 'Foul'

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Korean Rev. Sun Myong Moon, said in telegrams to ABC president Elton Rule and the FCC that the docu made "irresponsible charges that the church is a political rather than a religious organization."

The wires said that the show linked the Unification Church to the South Korean government and failed to allow any refutation from one of its officials. It was charged that the show not only aired such charges, but "asserted as fact" that such ties exist.

Church spokeswoman Susan Reinbold said that the church cooperated with show producer Tony Batten after he said that the docu would be about "the resurgence of American spirituality," and Batten "assured us the point was not to malign us or Rev. Moon."

Detroit Free Press

DETROIT FREE PRESS circa 1976

Church Sues for U.S. File ^{FREE PRESS}

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The Founding Church of Scientology sued the National Security Agency Wednesday, seeking release under the Freedom of Information Act of intelligence files the agency admits it holds on the church group.

The security agency first told the church that it could not locate the files, but after the Central Intelligence Agency said it had been provided the files by the National Security Agency, the NSA wrote to the church and said the files had been located but would not be released.

John R. Harney, the Freedom of Information appeal officer at the NSA, said in a letter to the church that because the material in the files was obtained "in the course of a classified foreign intelligence activity" it would not be released.

DESPITE SUSPICIONS, SCIENTOLOGY FLOURISHES

'We Are the Wave of the Future,' Church's Lifetime Guardian Tells Convention

BY JOHN DART
Times Religion Writer

Twenty-five years ago a writer-advocate named L. Ron Hubbard moved to Wichita, Kan., his fortunes at a low ebb.

Immediate success had greeted his 1950 book, "Dianetics," which came out about the same time that excerpts were published in two magazines, Explorers Journal and Astounding Science Fiction.

But Hubbard, also going through a divorce, had difficulties with authorities over the application of Dianetics.

Undaunted, he announced in April, 1951, that he was making Wichita the home of his Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation. Dianetics, the local newspaper reported, was "a science which attempts to make effective readjustment of people who are insane or neurotic."

An old friend, acting as Hubbard's part-time public relations adviser in Wichita, at one point wrote a memo to Hubbard suggesting he form churches to practice Dianetics and avoid government interference.

"Ron called back and said, 'I love your idea. I'll do it!' He left Wichita the next day," according to the friend, a journalist who asked not to be identified.

Hubbard started the Church of American Science in Washington, D.C., in early 1954 to be succeeded

by the Founding Church of Scientology. Scientology sources, who questioned the Wichita anecdote, say Hubbard left the Kansas city in June, 1951, and wrote four books and made numerous taped lectures, none of which talked about forming churches before 1954.

Nevertheless, today the Churches of Scientology are worldwide and have made a prosperous philosopher-prophet out of "Ron," as he is known

in an underhanded, if not illegal, manner. Those agencies have not commented publicly on the suits.

Thus, there was bitterness mixed with pride at Scientology's first international Conference for World Peace and Social Reform recently held at Anaheim Convention Center. The five-day gathering, which drew 6,550, closed Aug. 29 with a religious service on a human rights theme.

Whether the world likes it or not,

Scientology makes it a practice not to ignore criticism or unfavorable mentions. 'Ron says you only get hurt when you duck...'

to admiring followers, said to number about 600,000 Scientologists.

Scientology—strongest in California—has spread despite government opposition in most English-speaking countries amid suspicion of being either a pseudo-science or a pseudo-religion or both. Toning down some of its early healing claims and fighting back aggressively in the courts seem to have done it.

It claims it is still being unfairly investigated—as demonstrated by suits filed this summer accusing various public officials in California of "infiltrating" its churches to obtain infor-

them of psychological hangups and advance their self-understanding.

Some medical critics have questioned whether the now-voluminous and often mystical writings of Hubbard and the use of the E-meter, a \$215 device akin to a lie detector, are reliable methods.

In counterattacking, Scientology has criticized such practices as lobotomy, electroshock treatment and psychotherapy.

Its churches mounted their own "investigations" not only of the mental health establishment and the American Medical Assn. but also of U.S. government agencies they have tangled with—the Internal Revenue Service, the Food and Drug Administration, etc. It won a big battle with the FDA a few years ago when a U.S. appeals judge ruled the E-meter a religious artifact.

Scientology has filed numerous freedom of information suits in recent years in efforts, sometimes successful, to examine government files on itself.

As it has broadened its attack in the name of universal human rights of privacy, justice and freedom, Scientology has won a few non-Scientologist friends—and, importantly, diverted some attention away from its own practices.

Ex-CIA official Victor Marchetti, coauthor of "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," spoke at the church's



GUARDIAN—Rev. Jane Kember addresses Anaheim convention. Times photo by Michael Mally

Anaheim conference. Marchetti earlier charged the CIA, FBI and other government intelligence agencies with domestic interference in Scientology affairs.

Another conference speaker was Daniel Sheehan, a civil rights attorney, candidate for the Jesuit order and chairperson of the Washington Interreligious Task Force on Criminal Justice, supported by major Protestant and Catholic bodies.

Sheehan had contact with Washington Scientologists in lobbying against Senate Bill 1, a controversial

revision of the criminal code, and found the church members "extremely effective in linking people together in Washington."

In a well-received speech, Sheehan invited Scientologists to join "a growing Christian conspiracy" against what he terms a moneyed power elite on the right. "They are terrified of people who are truly religious," Sheehan said.

While admitting he was unfamiliar with Scientology's theology, Sheehan said he sensed the church was at a

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critical point in its evolution—"a shift from a medical-psychiatric fascination and getting it together as a human being to moving out . . . to resist domination by secular governments."

Two Democratic Assemblymen from Los Angeles, Art Torres and Richard Alatorre, also addressed the conference.

"My experience with the church has been very positive," said Alatorre. He chairs an Assembly committee studying human experimentation in penal institutions, which Scientology has opposed.

Scientology has also won a sympathetic ear from William Willoughby, religion editor-columnist of the Washington Star, particularly on the question of religious liberty. A speaker at the Anaheim meeting, Willoughby said privately that he likes Scientology's "methodology" but thinks its theology and religious practices give an "afterthought" impression.

The church says that Hubbard long ago discovered the idea that personhood is really an individual life force which he named the Theta.

Hubbard's metaphysics include the Eastern concepts of karma and reincarnation but are relatively silent on the nature of God. The latter pleases many members who either retain their traditional faiths or dislike a dogmatic picture of the deity.

Scientology ministers wear conventional black priestly suits and white collars when the occasion calls for it.

The Christian-like appearance is enhanced by the wearing of a cross. Scientologists explain it is not the crucifix but an ancient religious symbol with the horizontal bar denoting matter and the vertical symbolizing spirit.

It's still a religious struggle, for which the American religious establishment, which often regards Scientology as just one of many new sects and cults. The church's small "missions," which along with Scientology churches offer counseling and courses costing hundreds or thousands of dollars, were often called "franchises" until the late 1960s.

The major news media tend to be skeptical as well. Numerous articles were printed in the late 1960s illustrating some of Scientology's questionable practices, including orders to members to "disconnect" with antagonistic family and friends and classifying some ex-members as "fair game" for harassment.

Those policies were dropped, the church says, but Scientology remains highly sensitive to news coverage that goes beyond using a news release.

Any reporter or photographer who came to Anaheim Convention Center to cover the Scientology meeting was required to have an accompanying "media host" at all times.

Learning that a parents' group was planning to picket the conference, some Scientology ministers made unannounced calls on two of the principal leaders beforehand.

Mrs. Henrietta Crampton of Redondo Beach, whose protests have been principally against sects such as the Children of God, Hare Krishna and Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, said the two ministers stayed in her house for more than five hours. "We couldn't get rid of them," she said.

She said the protest was made in sympathy with other parents who complained about the amount of money their offspring have spent in Scientology.

The dozen parents who carried signs such as "Scientology, Religion or Racket?" were joined on the sidewalk outside the convention center, however, by Scientologists who held placards such as "Beware, Psychiatry Kills" and one with a misleading message, "Volunteer Parents of America United Against Organized Religion."

In defense of the tactics, Jeff Dubron, community affairs director for Scientology churches in the Los Angeles area, said the parent leaders had always refused to make appointments to discuss Scientology.

Dubron also said he was afraid a television crew might film the protesters, get a response and that would be the sum of TV coverage. (No camera crews showed up, however.)

While the incident was minor, it illustrates the standard practice of Scientology not to ignore criticism or unfavorable mentions. "Ron says you only get hurt when you duck," explained Dubron.

Besides the critical accounts of its defectors, part of Scientology's problems with credibility may lie with an impreciseness on information about itself.

Willing to talk at length about its antidrug abuse program called Narconon and various social reform plans, it is rather vague about membership figures despite its

tightly organized structure directed from its international headquarters at East Grimstead near London.

Guardian Jane Kember told the Anaheim conference that Scientologists in the United States now number more than 1% of the population; in other words, more than 2 million persons. The world figure is variously given as 3.5 or 4 million.

But Dubron said those numbers include those who have taken at least one Scientology course or bought at least two Scientology books.

Spokesmen say the active Scientologists worldwide are about 600,000. Freedom, the independent journal of the Church of Scientology, claims a circulation of 350,000.

Figures that may indicate the hard core of accomplished Scientologists are those who have become "Clear," persons defined as those cleared of "wrong answers or useless answers which keep (them) from living or thinking."

There are about 2,700 "Clears" in the United States and about 5,600 worldwide, according to Dubron.

Scientologists who advance on to higher states of spiritual achievement are called Operating Thetans. Until last spring, all of the advanced training was conducted in England, Copenhagen or Los Angeles. A second U.S. base was established last March when Scientology bought a Clearwater, Fla., hotel for more than \$2 million in cash.

At the same time, Scientology announced it was selling its 3,287-ton yacht Apollo, which since 1968 had served as the sometime home of Hubbard and a roving administrative center.

Hubbard still an influential voice in Scientology's affairs, Hubbard has been officially only a consultant to the church's board of directors for the last decade, spokesmen say.

The top two officers of the U.S. church are the Revs. Henning Heldt, 31, assistant guardian of the United States, and Arthur Maren, 34, whose role as public affairs director makes him the most visible official.

In her lecture-sermon to the Scientologists gathered in Anaheim, Jane Kember referred to the words and works of Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Mohammed, Gautama Buddha and 19th-century philosopher-libertarian John Stuart Mill.

Of Mill, she said, "He would have understood L. Ron Hubbard and Theta goals . . . for a nation without insanity, war and crime."

Referring to Hubbard's assertion that "certainty, not data, is knowledge," she said that with certainty Scientology can reverse the downward spiral of humanity.

"Remember," she added, "the only power the attacker has is the power you grant him." Deep down, she said, the opponent knows that "the only hope he has lies in your success."