Scientology As A Religious System Of Beliefs

Each individual has a set of beliefs that they believe to be true. Religions are shared systems of beliefs that have developed throughout history, significantly impacting a multitude of societies and cultures. Today, many religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, are universally recognized and have become ubiquitous. However, for some systems of beliefs, it is unclear whether or not they can be considered religions. Many belief systems are spiritualities. Whilst all religions are spiritualities, not all spiritualities are religions. To be a religion, spiritualities must comply with a specific set of characterizes surrounding beliefs and their adherents, ethics, rituals and ceremonies, and sacred texts. Scientology is a relatively new philosophy founded in 1953 by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. Although it is most commonly known as the ‘Church of Scientology’, it is not collectively viewed as a religion. Many countries still believe its beliefs and practices do not align with the characterizes of a religion. In spite of this, Scientology's features do demonstrate religious aspects, establishing itself as a religion in various cultures around the world.

Beliefs, Believers and Ethics

All religions have a set of beliefs or doctrines which are believed by adherents. Beliefs in different religions vary, especially those concerning the supernatural. Scientology is often compared to the Eastern faiths, Buddhism and Hinduism, because of its transcendent view of the supernatural and focus on one’s spiritual self. Hubbard first introduces Scientology as ‘the science of knowing how to know answers.’ Today, it is often described as ‘the study of truth’ and aims to move people from being preclear to clear. Scientology’s fundamental belief is that man is composed of three parts; the mind, the body and the thetan. The thetan is an immortal spiritual being, and the mind and body are things it has. Without the thetan, there is no life. Unlike most religions, Scientology is not based on faith alone. Instead, it encompasses the idea of ‘that which is true for you is what you have observed to be true.’ Adherents of this philosophy adopt its principles to discover their truth. In addition to being something they believe in; Scientology is something they do. Every religion has a concept of ethics which demonstrates how its doctrines are lived. Fundamental to Scientology's beliefs are the eight dynamics that sort life into the basic urges towards survival. This is evident through the practice of the dynamics which categorise life into 8 basic urges which include: the urge to survive as an individual (Self Dynamic), the urge to create to survive (Creativity Dynamic), the urge to survive through a group of individuals or as a group (Group Dynamic), the urge for the survival of all Mankind (Mankind Dynamic), the urge to survive for any and every form of life (Animal Dynamic), the urge for the physical universe to survive (Universe Dynamic), the urge to survive as spiritual beings (Spiritual Dynamic), and the urge for existence as infinity, also known as the Supreme Being (Infinity or God Dynamic). Through these dynamics, Scientologists believe that they can rehabilitate their spiritual self and improve the conditions in which they live. Consequently, Scientology holds a set of beliefs that are expressed through its ethics and are adopted by its adherents.

Rituals and Ceremonies

Religions each have rituals and ceremonies which are used by adherents to express devotion

and strengthen its community. Scientology's rituals and ceremonies are based on Hubbard's concept of Dianetics which introduces the idea of an analytical mind and a reactive mind. While most of your experiences are stored in your analytical mind, your reactive mind takes over when you are going through stressful situations. These negative experiences are then stored as mental pictures called engrams. Engrams leave behind painful scars which affect a person's ability to function. To combat this, Hubbard introduced a therapeutic process called 'auditing' which was designed to get rid of these engrams. Auditing involves several therapy sessions where individuals answer a series of questions to reveal the source of trauma. At the same time, an Electropsychometer, also known as an E-Meter, measures the spiritual state or electric flow of a person's body. This process allows the auditor to help a person from a preclear state to a clear state. Consequently, auditing enables an individual to experience higher states of spiritual awareness and removes people's negative emotions, irrational fears and psychosomatic illnesses. Through the notion of Dianetics, auditing is used by Scientologists to establish their dedication to their beliefs as well as strengthen their connection to the community. As a result, it can be seen as a ritual of Scientology.

Sacred Texts

Sacred texts capture the ethics of religions and aid in the interpretation of its key doctrines. Common examples in today's society include the Bible in Christianity, the Torah in Judaism, and the Quran in Islam. Scientology's basic principles stem from L. Ron Hubbard's concept of Dianetics. In 1950, Hubbard introduced this concept in his book, 'Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health.' This book established Dianetics as the science of knowledge with its key principles focussing on self-understanding and self-improvement. These principles were later adopted to form the beliefs, ethics and rituals used in Scientology. Consequently, Hubbard's book is a sacred text in Scientology.

Conclusion

Religions must have specific characteristics for them to be classified as a religion. Many belief systems meet these criteria but are not viewed as universally viewed as a religion. Scientology is one such belief despite its religious aspects. These are demonstrated through its fundamental belief of man as an immortal spiritual being, its ethics within the eight dynamics, auditing as a ritual, and Hubbard's book as a sacred text. Additionally, the eighth dynamic demonstrates Scientology's belief in the supernatural notwithstanding it's unclear dogma. Consequently, Scientology features all of the necessary characteristics of a religion. Thus, it can be considered a religious system of beliefs and classified as a religion.