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Condemnation is to Appreciation as Religion is to Time

In an age that is dominated by constant technological flow and skepticism, it is no wonder that a primitive idea is usually rejected. Mormonism is a 19th century religion, based off the revelations to an American man: Joseph Smith; and it has been rejected due to its unorthodox principles. Its medieval ideals of work and ethic can barely permeate the casual standards of Americans today. Mormonism is controversial and constantly criticized due to its beginnings, found only a meager 178 years ago. In a country that is brand new itself, a religion established within its borders is skeptical. Compared to most other accepted world religions of the day, Mormonism is cast aside and bombarded with heavily laden disapproval because of its origin and date of birth. It would not be looked upon so appallingly had it had time to mature and be integrated into society.

Taking a look at the early reactions of the religion, the atmosphere has not much changed. In an editorial to the Washington D.C. *National Journal*, a reader details that “some [Mormons] have been assured that they shall live a thousand years if they can get there,” noting that there is a measure of “delusion” that is “increasing” (Reflector). This was printed in 1831, only a year after Mormonism was founded. Today there are those that still write with ire at the unorthodox practices of this fledgling religion. Author Jon Krakauer dedicated an entire novel about the odd customs and tendencies of the Mormon faith in Under the Banner of Heaven. He detailed the horrors of polygamy in which

“incest [was] a common practice” (Krakauer 19). However due to the pressures of the modern world the Latter Day Saint, “leaders publicly claimed, in 1890, to have relinquished the practice” even though it had been considered one of their most sacred tenets (Krakauer 7). The appalling stories that Krakauer shares from this religion can be found in all faiths, each have their own indignity to share. The fact that polygamy is such a new concept to the 21st century is a big part of why it is subjugated to such discrimination. These attitudes of resistance to change and low tolerance fuel the fire of prejudice against the different.

Christianity is a parallel to Mormonism if one delves into its beginnings. Not only did it receive lack of tolerance and discrimination, but persecution as well. It was born in the midst of a polytheistic world, in which pagans sacrificed animals to inanimate objects. In its first century or two “the Christian church endured regular persecutions at the hands of Roman authorities” (“Persecutions”). Christians entailed these new and confusing customs of turning water into wine and believing there to be only one true God in their agenda. This did not settle well with those around them, for “religious beliefs were valid only insofar as it could be shown to be old and in line with the ancient customs” (“Persecutions”). What was greatly dissented then is widely accepted now. Acceptance was the product of time and integration, Christianity is now a dominant world religion. Mormonism faces the same battles, polygamy has been ousted, and the modern world questions their quaint traditions. Slowly, numbers have increased, as Mormonism was, “a religion with fewer than 5 million adherents in 1980 [and] now claims a membership of 11 million” (McLemee). Even newer religions are still being founded today, and they must submit to the same boos and hisses of the general public

just as Christianity did back in the first few centuries, and Mormonism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Scientology was founded “in 1954 based on the teachings of an American author named L. Ron Hubbard” in Los Angeles, California of the United States (“History of Scientology”). Just the fact that it was founded on American soil is the first clue to its damnation from the public. Like Mormonism, it was born in the United States; and unlike Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which were all founded in the Middle East. Mormonism was founded 178 years ago, and Scientology was founded a mere 54 years ago. Credibility in religion is established with age; testimonies and events are harder to prove and disprove with ancient history in the filing cabinet. This is what keeps Christianity and Judaism afloat amongst a sea of technology that is today’s world. Scientology is based off of the basic principle that “the individual is not a body but a spirit” (Robinson and Buttner). How much more radical is this than polygamy? Than a virgin bearing the Son of God? It isn’t. The disregard for things that are different is age old, and it takes time to be accepted. Humans enjoy a comfort zone that is threatened by new ideas, and after so many years followers will be acquired and a tolerable religion will be established. Just as Christianity’s “new and innovative teachings were regarded with distrust” so are those of Scientology and Mormonism (“Persecutions”).

Only time can truly dictate the outcome of such an occurrence. Religions are often subject to skepticism in our world arrested by the quest of truth. Mormonism will one day be an acceptable religion, a household term, the faith of your neighbors. It began like Christianity, opposition from the norm, and it parallels with Scientology in its establishment. Religion is always mythical, and instills a sense of security in some, and

insecurity in others. Perhaps this suggests that religion is but a simple force of stabilization that comes in many forms, it only takes time for acceptance to set in motion. However, as the reader of the *National Journal* would suggest, there is a measure of “delusion” that is “increasing” (Reflector). If not amongst the members of the established religion, then the world in which it operates.

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