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THE TAX LAWYER

Jul. 7 2012 – 5:39 pm

Katie Holmes: Removing Tom Cruise-And Scientology-Like A Band Aid

Why did Katie run? It seems unlikely it was one thing, and equally unlikely that Cruise's religion had no part, despite his claims [Scientology wasn't behind split](#).

Ironically, [Scientology](#) is supposed to get you [Clear](#) of unwanted influences, so maybe that's what happened.



Criticizing anyone's religion seems taboo given our country's history and guarantees. We might criticize a religious **practice**, but even that's dangerous unless it's universally decried—say, Jim Jones' followers' mass suicide in Jonestown. Fear Suri would be indoctrinated, especially into the extremism of [Sea Org](#) doesn't sound great either.

Still, there's that ethereal question of what's a religion. As a tax lawyer for [30 years](#), I've seen IRS scrutiny wax and wane, denying [Scientology](#) was a church for decades, then in 1993 abruptly [ruling](#) it a church, settling litigation. [The New York Times](#) claimed the IRS reversed 30 years of precedent to do it. Some cried foul then. Nearly 20 years later, there are claims the IRS should examine Scientology anew. See [IRS Should Review Scientology Tax-Exempt Status](#).

Some say the IRS should have no role, but the tax laws have a huge impact on all people and all organizations. How does the Cruise-Travolta religion stack up against church criteria? Some cite coercive fundraising and say the IRS has had the wool pulled over its eyes. See this [St. Petersburg Times series](#). Yet with separation of church and state, calls for the IRS or Congress to examine any religious organization makes us queasy.

If the IRS takes on Scientology again—which I doubt—it may be noisy. Can you form a [church](#) just for tax reasons? Church status brings huge tax advantages even compared with the tax perks of other exempt organizations. See [Christian Crusade For Tax Benefits](#). You need an IRS [determination letter](#) so churches and promoters sometimes face tax scrutiny.

Take Madonna's [Kabbalah](#), a Jewish movement with Zohar roots said to be 2,000 years old. Kabbalah claims 4,000 regular participants. The IRS says it's a legitimate religion but is pursuing a **criminal** investigation into tax evasion at Los Angeles' Kabbalah Centre. See [IRS Stirs The Kabbalah Pot](#) and [The Kabbalah Centre in Los Angeles is the focus of an IRS investigation into tax evasion](#).

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