

High Point?

A HUGE ROCK plopped into the Scientologists' frog pond Wednesday. The ripples may spread around the world.

A jury in Portland, Ore., decided that the Church of Scientology isn't really a church.

It said that Scientology does not deserve the constitutional protections given to true religions.

The jurors apparently believe that Scientology is, among other things, a training institution that promises (in exchange for cash) to do specific good things for a student's mental capacities.

And when it fails, the jury's decision seems to say, the Scientologists are subject to being found guilty of fraud.

THE COMPLAINANT, Julie Titchbourne, 21, was awarded more than \$2 million in damages. She had claimed that Scientology courses she paid \$5,000 for failed to do what Scientologists promised they would.

These promises included raising her IQ test scores, im-

proving her creativity and helping her with her college classwork.

Her suit amounted to a charge of consumer fraud, and the jury agreed with her.

The Scientologists will appeal the verdict. They are expected to say the trial judge erred in instructing the jury to weigh whether or not the Scientologists' promises were religious in nature and sincerely advertised as such.

If so, the judge said, the Scientologists deserved the protection given by state and federal constitutions to freedom of religious expression.

The jury deliberated almost three days. At the end of that time they voted unanimously that Ms. Titchbourne had been bilked.

EACH YEAR hundreds of Scientology students come to Clearwater to be improved. They pay large sums of money to the cult. Are they, too, being defrauded?

If the Portland verdict stands, we may see dozens of similar lawsuits against the Scientologists and other pseudo-religious organizations that make specific promises on which they cannot or will not deliver.

Some of these suits will be frivolous and ill-founded.

But others will make plain the disillusionment thousands of cult members feel when they discover they have turned over their minds and their money to an organization that doesn't really care about them.

With the Titchbourne decision, cults may have reached their high point in the United States.

Now, the cult leaders know that the Julie Titchbournes of the land can strike back and make it hurt.

Bible Thought

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. Isa. 40:28.

In whom are all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge hidden. Col. 2:3.

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