The Church of the Universe: Is It a Religion?

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Abstract

[2009.07.20] To answer the court's question, we propose a continuum that includes the three types of worldview that exist today: religious, hybrid, and secular. Our goal is to place the Church of the Universe (COU)[1] on this continuum by citing evidence from its websites, affidavits, and "expert reports." Our conclusion is that the evidence for the COU as a religion is extremely thin Of the ten characteristic features that we associate with religious worldviews, the COU shows the most minimal levels of religiosity for five characteristics out of ten, not even minimal levels for four of them, and the possibility of one. In other words, the COU lacks four characteristic features of religion and has only token examples of five. We would expect all worldviews that claim religious status to qualify more than minimally in most categories (although we would expect in addition that not all would emphasize the same ones).

The COU's websites contain a lot of secular legal material, and no one would define Canadian law as religious, so we must ask whether the COU is a hybrid worldview or a secular one? Because we find that it has a thin veneer of New Age, which is a hybrid worldview, we conclude that the COU swings between hybridity and secularity (not between hybridity and religion). This means that some people might join the COU to have experiences that they interpret as spiritual in a group context but also that many others might do so merely to buy, use, and sell marijuana without fear (in anticipation of a victory in court) of prosecution. In that case, the COU uses religion as a front (although members would deny this classification).

Introduction

Our goal here is to classify the Church of the Universe (COU). Is it a religion? And if not, what is it? [2] To answer the initial questions, therefore, we will (1) define our terms and (2) apply those terms to the COU.

Defining our terms

Worldviews

We use "worldview" as the broadest category for our purposes here, because we lack a better word, even though it has connotations that are too cognitive. All social groups (families, communities, and so forth) either inherit or produce worldviews: general orientations that bind people together by giving them not only enough meaning and purpose for life to make sense but also guidance for the activities that create communal life. These worldviews include the following characteristic features: both cognitive and experiential dimensions; both conscious and unconscious dimensions; and both personal and collective dimensions. There are now three main kinds of worldview: (a) religious; (b) hybrid; and (c) secular.

Religious worldviews: Our definition of "religious worldview" relies on both cross-cultural and historical evidence and thus makes possible an empirical definition. It encompasses not only world religions[3] such as Sikhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism—all of which are minority religions in Canada—but also primal, or aboriginal, religions.[4]

This definition is our own, because there is no standard definition of religion in the field of religious studies (just as there is no standard definition of culture in the field of anthropology, art in the field of art history, and so on). This is partly because religion, which occurs in extremely varied circumstances, is a very complex phenomenon. Many experts have bypassed the problem altogether by resorting to extreme generality (such as asserting that religion is an "ultimate concern").[5] Others have bypassed it by resorting to extreme specificity (whatever fits the particular traditions in which they specialize). Neither approach offers much help to lawyers. Ultimate concerns can refer to any concerns, after all, including those of movements such as Marxism, feminism, and nationalism. Expecting the unique features of one culture to match those of others, moreover, makes no sense. We think that our empirical definition solves these problems; it is neither too general nor too specific.[6] We have illustrated our definition with examples from both world religions (in appendix 1) and a primal one, peyote religion (in appendix 2).

Religious worldviews have all the characteristic features of every worldview plus the following ten.

(1) They presuppose either supernatural dimensions or ultimate experiences (or both) that transcend but also transform everyday life.

(2) They help people live with fundamental paradoxes of the human condition and respond to existential questions that emerge from it.

(3) They rely on symbol systems that give coherence to both personal and communal life; apart from doing anything else, religion provides the symbolic glue that holds communities together.

(4) They presuppose both sacred time (as distinct from profane, not secular, time) and sacred space (as distinct from profane, not secular, space).

(5) They find primary expression in forms such as myth, scripture, hagiography (sacred biographies), and ritual.

(6) They find secondary expression in their interpretations and applications of primary ones; these secondary expressions include kinship, taboo, theology, philosophy, morality, law, the arts, and so on.

(7) Considering the characteristic primary and secondary features of religious worldviews together, it becomes clear that they are comprehensive or nearly comprehensive ways of life.

(8) They sustain groups (defined by birth or choice), not merely isolated individuals; every community has a public dimension, in other words, which involves at least some face-to-face encounters.

(9) They claim sources of authority for these ways of life and thus for belonging to the group.

(10) They are successful enough to endure for a long time.

Secular worldviews: For practical purposes, we must describe secular worldviews before hybrid ones, even though secular ones occur at one end of the continuum.

The word "secular" has a long history. In Latin, saeculum refers simply to the "world" of everyday life.[7] In popular parlance today, however, "secular" has taken on the connotation of "worldly" (as distinct from "otherworldly"); by extension, it has come to mean either indifferent or hostile to religion.) Secular worldviews have all the characteristic features of every worldview except the following:

(1) They presuppose only the natural or cultural order[8] as known to us through the senses.

(2) They acknowledge only reason in general and science in particular as the ultimate authority.

Before proceeding, please note that the word "secular," like the word "religious," is an academically neutral label. Nothing that we write should indicate that either is more valuable than the other; each is merely a distinct phenomenon.

Hybrid worldviews: These have occurred throughout history, but we are interested here in those that combine religion and secularity in response to modernity. These combine religion and secularity in various ways: explicit religiosity with implicit secularity, implicit religiosity with explicit secularity, or explicit religiosity and secularity.[9] Among the most common today are those known collectively as New Age.[10] We will use New Age as our case study here.

New Age groups—over 3,000 have emerged since the 1960s[11]—have the following characteristics:

(1) They refer to supernatural dimensions or ultimate experiences, but these dimensions or experiences are less transcendent than those of most religious worldviews.

(2) They discuss paradoxes and existential questions, but their discussions are much thinner than those of religious worldviews.

(3) They use eclectic symbol systems, which can undermine coherence.

(4) They designate sacred times and spaces, but they give prominence to neither.

(5) They acknowledge ~~primary c~~ primary features of religion such as myth, scripture, hagiography, and ritual. But these are usually ad hoc, syncretistic, or "thin."

(6) They acknowledge secondary features of religion such as taboo, theology, philosophy, morality, the arts, and so on. By emphasizing personal choice, however, they limit these features to the ones that allow as much personal autonomy as possible.

(7) They refer often to "holism," which connotes comprehensiveness. Because New Age groups have few secondary features, however, the word "comprehensive" is somewhat arbitrary.

(8) They often emerge to deliver or induce intense experiences. Being so individualistic, however, these groups tend to be both amorphous and ephemeral.

(9) They adopt either pragmatic or individualistic attitudes to authority.

(10) They have not yet endured for a long time.

Applying these characteristic features to the COU

Does the COU correspond to any of these definitions? To find out, we will try to match the COU with the characteristic features of (a) religious worldviews, (b) hybrid worldviews, and (c) secular worldviews.

The COU as a religious worldview

Do claims of the COU add up to a religious worldview as defined here? To find out, we have examined these claims in connection with the ten characteristic features of religious worldviews.

(1) Religious worldviews presuppose the possibility of either encountering supernatural beings or having ultimate experiences (or both)—and thus of being radically transformed: First, here are some definitions. The word "supernatural" refers to something beyond the natural order. By "supernatural beings," therefore, we mean benevolent or malevolent ones to whom the usual conditions of everyday life (including mortality and other forms of finitude) do not apply. These include ancestors, local spirits, and gods or goddesses.[12] By "ultimate experiences," we mean those that religious people cannot describe effectively in everyday language. Some resort to poetic allusions. Others try to explain them by referring to "oceanic" experiences in which they merge with the cosmos and thus lose their ability or need to distinguish between subject (themselves) and object (the universe). Still others refer to the ineffable, "not this, not that," the true self, omnipresent vitality, a power, "emptiness," or simply the "unnamable." Both possibilities, encountering supernatural beings and experiencing the ultimate, can be either spontaneous or the result of religious disciplines such as meditation. People can experience the ineffable or the transcendent, for instance, as eruptions into the everyday realm, or they can induce these by means of religious techniques.

The COU claims to provide adherents with access to both supernatural dimensions and ultimate experiences. Here are some of its many references to the supernatural – that is, to God or Goddess. According to one of its websites, "It is our understanding that God is all that is. God is all that is not."[13] According to another, "God is God ..."[14] On the same page, we find references to "God, our

Father, God our Mother."[15] A fuller explanation of the latter refers more specifically to "Goddess Cunti."[16]

Elsewhere, the COU refers to its purported ultimate and transformative experience: "The Church of the Universe holds the Tree of Life, Marijuana, as sacred from the Garden of Eden, a gift from God."[17] Even before joining the COU, Reverend Sufian Kharaghani had smoked cannabis. "I found myself to be more peaceful, he says in his affidavit, "and in tune with the world around me. I found myself more curious about spirituality. I felt more connected to my fellow humans, to nature and to God. I felt, when I smoked cannabis like I was freeing my mind."[18] This could have been his conversion expeience. Many Christians—including St. Paul—have had visionary experiences to which they respond by joining the church. On the other hand, maybe this passage shows that he did nOt require membership to have this kind of experience. Eventually, he not only joined but also became a minister of the COU. "I surround myself with the Tree of Life," writes Shahrooz Kharagani, "in as many ways as I can. I feel its energy whenever it surrounds me, even when I'm wearing it. But the experience is different depending on how you use or consume it. One of the ways I use the Tree of Life is consuming it, which includes inhaling it. I need to experience it this way to pray. Doing so brings me closer to God. I feel inhaling the Tree of Life opens the door to my consciousness and free will. Without it, my mind is too cluttered with other thoughts to focus on being with God."[19]

In this regard, then, the COU does not qualify as the purveyor of a religious worldview. Religion involves not only an ultimate experience, after all, but also an ultimate and transformative one. Besides, peace and serenity can be part of a secular experience, not only of a religious one. The reference is that of only one person, moreover, and he gives no examples of any behavioral transformation. If the experience had led him, directly or even indirectly, to join the church, that would count as transformative behavior. But the church requires no behavioral transformation. Besides, the reference does not occur within scripture or any other religiously authoritative text. With no text to authorize particular kinds of behavior, we have no standard against which to measure his behavior. All we have is his description of his own subjective and personal experience. The analogy would be to Jews, Christians who declare themselves prophets or reincarnations of prophets, even though scripture warns people to beware of false prophets: those whose claims do not lead to authorized behavior by them or their followers. Similarly, feeling "energy" and "consciousness" need not be religious experiences. Moreover, the reference indicates no behavioral transformation.

(2) Religious worldviews help people live with fundamental paradoxes of the human condition and respond to the existential questions that emerge from it: Fundamental paradoxes include the apparent conflict between order and chaos, life

and death, self and others, male and female; nature and culture, mind and body, finitude and infinity. Existential questions emerge from universal (as distinct from personal) problems such as the following: why injustice exists, why the innocent suffer, why compassion is better than revenge, why people must sometimes sacrifice themselves for the common good, and so on. We can sum up these questions with one very general one: Why are things the way that they are (and not better)? Religious worldviews answer these questions by highlighting paradoxes that emerge from the human condition; people must always try to reconcile and thus live between opposites.

Consider one universal existential problem: the seemingly dichotomous but also interdependent relation between men and women – that is, between either maleness and femaleness or masculinity and femininity. Every society must find ways of bringing men and women together to serve the needs not only of men and women per se but also those of society as a whole. And yet the COU has clearly not even tried to find a balance between those who advocate sexual complementarity and those who advocate sexual polarization. One COU site refers respectfully to "Brothers and Sisters of the SACRED HERB."[20] Another says that men and women are important not only for each other but also for creation: "The waters must flow. Man and woman must create between them universal peace and love. God created all under the sun, both good and evil. The woman and the man fill the positive requirements of the creation."[21]

Yet another, however, promotes extreme female supremacy in connection with its "rules." According to the Wo-Man's Auxiliary, at any rate, "1. The female always makes the rules. 2. The rules are subject to change at any time without prior notification. 3. No male can possibly know all the rules. Nearly all females are born with this knowledge. 4. If the female suspects the male knows all the rules, she may immediately change some or all of the rules. 5. The female is never wrong. 6. If the female is wrong, it is because of a misunderstanding, which was a direct result of something the male did or said wrong. 7. If rule #6 applies, the male must apologize immediately for causing the misunderstanding. 8. The female can change her mind at any given point in time. 9. The male must never change his mind without express written consent from the female. 10, The female has every right to be angry or upset at any time."[22] If these rules are satirical, the website does not say so. So, the COU advocates two contradictory positions. This hardly amounts to helping people live with a paradox.

In this regard, then, the COU definitely does not qualify as the purveyor of a religious worldview. Members present no evidence to suggest that they have struggled to find meaning in the world, to understand and reconcile existential conflicts—or even to think about the meaning of life and death.

(3) Religious worldviews rely on symbol systems that give coherence to both personal and communal life; apart from doing anything else, religion provides the symbolic glue that holds communities together: A major symbol for the COU is the Tree of Life, from Genesis, which members identify with marijuana. We will focus here, though, on other visual symbols. Consider the nine-pointed star: three equilateral triangles, which form a tetrahedron. The latter represents "the Spirit of Man," "the Spirit of Woman," "the Spirit of Daughters," and "the Spirit of Sons." In addition, they represent "the All Seeing Eye of God" and many other things.[23] One website shows a symbolic collage. Incised on the trunk of a "tree of life" are three additional symbols: a Jewish menorah,[24] a Star of David, and a Christian fish[25] (which refer to the two established religious traditions that, interpreted in new ways, presumably confer legitimacy on the COU). Near the top of this trunk, moreover, is a wooden cross beam (recalling that of the Christian symbol). At the crossing is a Celtic cross.[26] Over the cross is a marijuana leaf. And between its arms are the words "spiritual," "medical," industrial," and "agricultural." Although sectarian movements often come up with very intricate symbols, the most fundamental religious symbols are very simple: a star, a cross, a crescent, an "om" inscription, a "yin-yang" circle, and so on. The marijuana leaf is an obvious symbol for people whose lives revolve around smoking pot.

Like many other religious groups, moreover, the COU has adopted at least some symbolic clothing – at least for the clergy. Church officials wear caps, for instance, or turbans. It is worth noting, though, that the Church has borrowed both forms of headgear. Many religious groups have borrowed things from other groups. One obvious example in the West would be the Christian appropriation of Hebrew scripture (along with many symbols and rituals) from Judaism. Our point here is merely that the COU has not deviated from the religious pattern in this particular way.]

Like many other religious and secular groups (such as athletic teams or colleges), colors have symbolic associations for members of the COU. "Our Church colours," notes one website, "are Purple, Gold and Green. Purple is God's colour (Justice). Gold is the Sun which is God's Creation for the benefit of everything (Power). The earth is Green for the benefit of everything (Fairness)."[27]

Of greatest interest here, though, is probably "the wall." Like many churches and synagogues, the COU has established a memorial wall—a virtual one in this case. It commemorates the group's martyrs: those who "have been terrorized [by narcs] and who have fought back, sometimes giving their lives."[28]

In this regard, the COU does not qualify as the purveyor of a religious worldview. Because human beings are by definition symbol-making animals—language itself is a characteristic symbol system—it would be hard to imagine any human enterprise at all that lacks symbols. With the exception of its emotionally

and politically charged "wall," however, most of these symbols seem strangely conglomerated. Unlike traditional religious symbols, simple forms that emerge gradually from communal experience or insight, these have been appropriated from a variety of sources and therefore lack coherence.

(4) Religious worldviews presuppose sacred time (as distinct from profane—not secular—time) and sacred space (as distinct from profane—not secular—space): To extrapolate from what religious people say, the sacred (or holiness) and the profane exist in dialectical relation to each other. Neither can exist without the other; if either exists, so does the other. Both religious people and secular people can experience the world in terms of information that comes only through the senses; it is what it appears to be, nothing more and nothing less. But religious people claim that, in some circumstances, they can experience the world in a very different way. Sometimes, they experience the world's sacred dimension. Normally, however, they experience its profane dimension. For religious people, this is only apparently without meaning and purpose, not inherently without meaning and purpose. The profane means the ordinary, the superficial, the shallow, the peripheral. But its purpose is to become a vehicle for the special, the deep, the profound, the central – which is to say, a venue for the sacred. For religious people, unlike secular people,[29] experiencing the sacred is an inherent possibility. One primary goal of religion is to reveal the sacred, therefore, within the profane.

One Christian example is familiar to most Canadians. Bread and wine are ordinary products that people can buy in grocery stores or even make for themselves. In a liturgical context, however, members of many Christian communities can experience them in a special way: as the body and blood of Christ. But here is a non-religious analogy from the world of abstract art. For some people, Untitled 1959, by Mark Rothko, is nothing more than a variety of red pigments that the artist has deposited on a piece of canvas that he has stretched over a wooden frame; even if they learn from a museum catalogue what Rothko was trying to convey, it has little or no effect on them; it is an inert object. For other people, though, it is that but also much more than that. In addition, it is a hauntingly evocative image that produces an intensely emotional response (although, because this is an abstract image instead of a representational one, that response can differ a great deal from one viewer to the next). For whatever reason, some people are open to the aesthetic and others are not. Similarly, some people are open to the sacred and others are not. But every human society has produced people who are open to the aesthetic and people who are open to the sacred. In this sense, we can say that both art and religion are universal human phenomena.

In short, the profane – that is, to be more precise, the sacred-profane dialectic – is not secular; the secular is characteristic of modernity and recognizes neither the

sacred nor the profane. Moreover, common parlance notwithstanding, the profane is not evil (or "dirty"). On the contrary, it is what provides access to the sacred.

Religious people orient themselves in time toward special events. They go through the ordinary week or year, for example, in anticipation of holy days such as festivals. On those occasions, they can either re-experience events that occur "before history" (primordial events such as creation of the cosmos and founding of the community) or pre-experience events that occur "after history" (eschatological events such as arrival in paradise or inauguration of a new world order). People can experience the sacred also, however, either spontaneously (in theophanies such as visions and auditions) or in the context of practices (such as meditation); these experiences transcend the normal conditions of time.

Religious people orient themselves, similarly, in space. They travel through ordinary terrain to reach the sacred precincts of sacred groves, mountains, rivers, temples, tombs of saints, and so on. The ultimate goal of many pilgrims, for instance, is to reach the axis mundi, where earth meets heaven (and often the underworld as well). There, they can have direct experiences in connection with divine beings, cosmic oneness, or "emptiness." Elsewhere, they can do so only indirectly through symbols. Sacred space is the cosmic center, in short, and profane space the periphery.

The COU is ambivalent about sacred time. One passage says that members meet regularly in some places. Those of a Toronto assembly, for instance, meet every Sunday—that is, "two or three dozen people gather in the Garden."[30] Official holidays, moreover, include the summer solstice (21 June); the winter solstice (22 December); Cannabis Day (a personally chosen day in July, "similar to Christian Christmas and/or Jewish Hanukkah holidays"); personal birthdays; and "any time." According to one website, "God asks [any time to] be set aside for worship ... Religion and Worship is a personal experience and a fundamental right."[31] Another passage says that members "decide for themselves ways and times to use God's Tree of Life."[32] The problem here is that no religion fails to identify some specific times as sacred and others as profane. The COU recognizes mainly secular days (Cannabis Day and birthdays). Moreover, it pays only lip service to the solstices.

The COU is ambivalent about sacred space, too. One place emerges as a possible version of sacred space. "On the 360 acres of wilderness and spring-fed quarry, Walter Tucker blessed the land with a new name, 'Clearwater Abbey,' and founded a new religion with Michael Baldasaro, the Church of the Universe"[33] Moreover, "the church wants to convert the site into a self-sufficient community based on the production and manufacture of hemp."[34] Elsewhere, Dan Loehndorf observes that "persecuted church members like Archbishop Baldasaro pray for a day when they can reconsecrate the holy land of Clearwater Abbey. A day when

they can break the ice of the quarry, and open a hole through which marijuana smokers everywhere might escape into freedom."[35] "The Church of the Universe," says Christopher Lawson in quasi-Christian terms, "accepts that wherever two or more are gathered together in the spirit of the herb, then the Holy Spirit makes that place holy. God is counted as one of the two or more so even a single believer is in church while communicating with God via the sacramental smoke/vapor. If it is outdoors then it becomes a sacred grove or a high place. If it is indoors it becomes a church."[36] Once again, the problem here is that no religion fails to identify some specific places as sacred.

In this regard, therefore, the COU qualifies technically as the purveyor of a religious worldview but only at a minimal level. Our sources of evidence refer to a few special times and places but these are mainly secular and personal.

(5) Religious worldviews find primary expression in forms such as myth, scripture, hagiography, ritual, and so on: First, once again, here are some definitions. In common parlance, the word "myth" refers to propositions that are false (sometimes deliberately false), primitive science, or childish fantasies. In scholarly parlance, however, myths are symbolic stories—not propositions—about the human condition and its existential problems. Some are about ultimate origin and destiny (divine creators of the cosmos, primeval founders of the community, and so on). Others provide exemplary figures as guides to proper conduct. At first, people transmit them orally. Eventually, some societies transmit them in written form and even incorporate them into scripture.

The COU has no myths, much less scriptures. The closest we come to a hagiography in the COU literature is a laudatory church history. It relies on some interviews with Tucker by Loehndorf, who was working for the on-line magazine Cannabisculture. In this first-person narrative, Loehndorf reveals his interest as a marijuana smoker in the COU. "I butted out the joint" or "we smoke the "peace pipe" or "Reverend Tucker and I share some smoke"[37]

The COU does, however, have rituals. "On Sundays at the G13 Church," says Sufian Kharagani, "gatherings were held. Food would be provided free of charge to anybody that came. Commonly as many as 50 people would be fed. One of the reverends ... would make a speech. Sacrament would be consumed. Although conversation was not structured, it was also not a time for gossip or negative matters."[38] Moreover, marijuana is a "sacrament." According to one website, members require it in the "search for an understanding of their spirituality and connection with The Almighty God."[39] Another COU ritual is "hand fasting" ("hand fastening"?). This is "a probationary marriage, for a set period (often a year in length, but it varies) during which two people agree to live together as a married couple. I prefer," says Loehndorf, who has by now joined the Moody Bay Mission,

"to perform the ceremony by having the couple join hands; I then loosely encircle the couple's joined hands with a short length of hemp rope. Afterward, the couple shares the holy tree. Of course, like any ceremony, the hand fasting should be performed with the needs and the traditions of the individuals involved in mind. What is effective for them should be a prime consideration."[40] According to Loehndorf, "the sacred Tree is a central element in church weddings, last rites, and even baptisms, in which the oil of the Tree is used to anoint the child's forehead."[41] Lawson sums up the COU's attitude toward ritual, which gives it minimal importance. "The only rule of worship," he observes, "is to listen to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. This voice tells us to receive the sacred herb with joy, gratitude and celebration. As far as format for worship goes, improvise collectively or act autonomously."[42]

In this regard, then, the COU qualifies technically as the purveyor of a religious worldview but only at the most minimal level. It has produced no myths, no scriptures, no formal hagiographies, although it has produced some rituals (albeit often improvised ones).

(6) Religious worldviews find secondary expression in their interpretations and applications of primary ones; these secondary expressions include taboo, theology, philosophy, morality, law, the arts, and so on: Please note that "theology" is not equally important in all religious worldviews. Christians, especially Protestants, do emphasize theology, but even their worldview involves a lot more than assent to a creed. At the very least, it involves faith. And by "faith," they refer first and foremost to trust in God (as well as beliefs about God's trustworthiness). As for "theology," the usual connotation is an analytical approach to the content of myth or scripture. It crystallizes as doctrines or creeds; theologians produce the former and sometimes organize them (often for liturgical purposes) as creeds. But many religions foster god-talk without resorting to systematic treatises. They still produce theology, but it is theology in some other form – usually narrative. Both theistic and non-theistic traditions produce philosophy.

The COU has a creed: "We believe that the Tree of Life is necessary to our understanding and worship of Almighty God. We believe that the Tree of Life opens a path to spiritual growth and connection with Almighty God and us, the Children. We believe that the Tree of Life is for the healing of the nations (Revelation Chapter 22). We believe that everyone has the right to worship God, to explore and create their own understanding of spirituality and growth in connection with God. First God, then Humanity, then Government. We believe in standing and kneeling before Almighty God and no other."[43]

One website[44] offers an "abridged theological discussion" of the following topics: "Mesopotamia; the basalt frieze; King Assurbanipal; the holy anointing oil;

the holy incense; the anointed miracles; Jesus the initiator; Kingdom of Heaven; rediscovery of gnostic texts; oneness and ritual incense of saints; cannabis as religion; Jesus healing ministry reawakens; [and the] three-pronged jail test." Included here is a "full unedited bibliography," moreover, which includes works both scholarly and popular on gnosticism, ancient religions, magic, miracles, goddesses, drugs, and so on.

Moreover, the COU has produced two basic moral guidelines: "Don't hurt yourself" and "Don't hurt anyone else."[45] These rules amount to versions of the original Golden Rule in its Jewish form ("Do not do unto others ... "), though not its Christian, form ("Do unto others ... "). In addition, the COU encourages members to provide the sick with medicinal marijuana and other forms of assistance to members in need. "Church members are required to provide medicinal sacrament to the sick." [46] According to Sytrsky, moreover, the Church was "more substantive than just promoting the consumption of cannabis. The Church promotes the message of pacifism, not harming yourself or others, and calls attention to the importance of supporting members of the community who are in need."[47]

Some religious worldviews use the arts to illustrate the lives of founders, saints, or martyrs and to propagate doctrines. Others use them to produce settings for ritual activities. Still others, especially in modern times, use the arts to explore fundamental paradoxes or existential problems of the human condition. This is a notable feature of "art cinema." Ingmar Bergman has explored these topics explicitly in The Seventh Seal and Winter Light, for instance, and even Woody Allen has done so implicitly in Shadows and Fog and Whatever Works. For some religious worldviews, the visual arts are problematic. But even Judaism and Islam, which explicitly oppose visual representations, have produced visual art. In fact, we know about many ancient religions mainly because of the artifacts that they left behind. Art has now gone its own way, just as medicine and many other cultural enterprises have, but it was once almost by definition an expression of religion.[48] The link is so intimate, so enduring, and so pervasive, in fact, that it would be hard to imagine any religious worldview that has not expressed itself aesthetically. With this mind, consider the COU. One website does indeed have an "art gallery" page[49] with commercial links under "music" to a couple of CD's (What If God Smoked Cannabis? and The Hemp SeeDee) and under "paintings" to the works of four artists who belong to the COU (Joseph Djeault, Tim Gates, Wayne Phillips, and James C. Kirby). Not all of these paintings have anything to do with marijuana (although Djeault uses real leaves on some of his canvases), let alone to any religious use of marijuana or religion of any kind—unless you consider animals of the Chinese zodiac "spiritual." COU artists could use art to depict the experience of exaltation while smoking marijuana, to be sure, and they might well do so in the future. So far, however, they have not done so.

In this regard, the COU qualifies technically as the purveyor of a religious worldview. But the religious aspect of this worldview is clearly minimal—nothing more than a simple creed and a few general ethical principles that anyone could adopt in any context.

(7) Considering the primary and secondary features of religious worldviews together, it becomes clear that religions are comprehensive or nearly comprehensive ways of life: In other words, they include much more than what many people would now consider the most obviously religious features such as rituals or prayers; they include also the more nitty-gritty aspects of life that many people in our society would assume to be inherently secular: the economic, political, medical, artistic, and so on.

As an example of comprehensiveness, consider the following from one COU website, "It is imperative that our Holy Church Sacrament, God's Tree of Life, Marijuana, by all its names and terms of endearment, be grown by our own Herbalists/Farmers, and distributed by our own Church Clergy ... We in the church use many of the gifts of the Tree of Life (marijuana). Our clothes are made of it and the oils we use to help boost our immune systems come from the seed which in itself is delicious, healing, healthful and nutritious. We write on it and wash with it and believe that as our new generations identify with all of the marvelous gifts which can be derived from this wonderful Herb, then the prophecies of the Bible will become reality."[50]

Those who would deny that the COU is a religious community because of its commercial activities—selling the sacrament—should know that commercial activities are not necessarily secular (although these could well be secular in this particular case). Traditional religions, as we say, do not acknowledge the existence of secularity[51] and therefore do not exclude commercial activities from their purview.

Everywhere, markets spring up at pilgrimage sites. Commercial activity increases on festival days. Vendors usually line the way to Hindu temples, for instance, selling not only flowers and fruits for temple rituals but also religious artifacts for personal use (let alone electronic equipment). In the past, moreover, Hindu temples (and Buddhist monasteries) lent money to long-distance traders. Temples themselves, moreover, sometimes sell special food that priests have offered to gods or goddesses who have "touched" it and thereby transformed it into a divine substance. And remember that a legitimate goal for any Hindu, though not the ultimate one, is material prosperity and thus commercial success.

Orthodox and Hasidic Jews understand all commercial activities within the context of sacred law; their goal is to conduct all business transactions according to the halakhah (as explicated in great detail by the rabbis in the Talmud and other

commentaries). They see nothing "secular" about selling ritual objects in stores and even selling obviously holy objects such as Torah scrolls, let alone paying rabbis and other officials – such as those who certify that food products are kosher—for their services to the community.[52]

Muslims, too, use sacred law to guide and evaluate every aspect of daily life. One goal is to conduct all business transactions according to the Islamic law, for instance, which is why the shariah prohibits interest on loans. Many stores in Canada cater to Muslims by selling them religious artifacts.

The Roman Catholic Church has always allowed and even encouraged people to buy holy relics and souvenirs at pilgrimage sites. The medieval Church sold papal "indulgences," too, which minimized the time that sinners would have to spend in purgatory. Eventually, the Church stopped selling indulgences but not because it saw anything inherently wrong or "secular" in commerce per se. Martin Luther objected strongly to the sale of indulgences, one factor that set off the Reformation. He and other early Protestants took a new approach to commerce due partly[53] to their renewed emphasis on scripture and rediscovery of the story about Jesus throwing moneychangers out of the Temple (although that passage condemns the moneychangers for turning a sacred temple into a "den of robbers,"[54] not necessarily for commercial activity per se).

At the moment, Protestants disagree with each other on commerce. Evangelical Protestants use American business techniques very effectively not only to sponsor the ministries of televangelists – who appeal directly for money while preaching – but also to build mega-churches and religious theme parks. Liberal and some traditional Protestants, on the other hand, tend to see commerce as necessary but secular; they believe that religion itself has nothing to do with business, but they administer their churches and even hire their clergy nonetheless according to business or managerial models. (By now, even many Catholics in largely Protestant countries have adopted the same approach; they often challenge capitalism from the pulpit, for instance, but tolerate bingo games in the basement to support their parishes.) Modern Protestantism is one of the few religions, at any rate, to produce debate over the relation between religion and commerce. But ambivalence over commerce is both historically and cross-culturally unusual. You cannot argue effectively that the COU is non-religious, in short, merely because it encourages members to sell the "sacrament." More about this in due course.

In this regard, the COU does qualify technically—but barely—as the purveyor of a religious worldview. Members testify that their worldview affects various aspects of daily life, after all, not only the overtly "spiritual" ones that many people now associate with religion (due to secularization, a process in which the state and other institutions take over what were once functions of religion). Even so, this

worldview touches fewer areas of life than most religions do and without much depth.

(8) Religious worldviews apply to groups (defined by birth or choice), not to isolated individuals; group life always has a public dimension, in other words, which involves at least some face-to-face encounters: By "public," we do not necessarily refer to masses of people. We refer to something other than "private." Religion is never an entirely private affair. Even those who have initial religious experiences that involve no others, after all, characteristically try to describe these experiences to other people and sometimes found new communities as a result of them. A community with strong boundaries might require formal conversion and expulsion. One with weak boundaries might offer informal affiliation, thus allowing several identities (for example, "a Confucian by day, a Taoist by night"). Still others might not even think about identity, moreover, unless someone challenges it.

The COU is obviously a group, a community, in this case one that defines itself by choice instead of birth. Some members come together as a virtual community on the internet. Lawson says that "Church correspondence on the Internet keeps isolated enclaves connected to Church news."[55] At least a few, however, come together periodically as a loose face-to-face community. "The sense of community among members ... is very important. We are all Brothers and Sisters. The sacrament allows us to touch the God inside ourselves and ... truly understand both ourselves and our Brothers and Sisters. Often when we listen to the problems of a Brother or Sister, we share sacrament with them. The sacrament helps them heal."[56] At any rate, the COU has established at least minimal entrance requirements. "Membership is free and open to all of God's Creatures who believe God is God. Taken literally, this is a tautology. On the other hand, it could be a clumsy way of saying that God created all "creatures" and is thus sovereign over all beings, human and non-human. The only pre-requisite to becoming a member is a belief in God and adherence to the Word of God [and] the Golden Rules."[57]

As a group, moreover, the COU has a minimal structure. This refers to the founding abbot (Tucker), a founding archbishop (Baldasaro), the Tetrahedron High Council (the inner circle whose activities no one describes), and various local missions (one of which, for instance, is the Morning Star Mission of God in Hamilton). Missions are autonomous but interconnected groups. Each has a charter. Members can become either ministers or missionaries.

In this regard, the COU qualifies technically as a religious group, although it probably relies more heavily than traditional groups on "virtual" communities, even encourages purely pro-forma affiliation, and emphasizes individualism.

(9) Religious worldviews claim sources of authority for these ways of life and thus for belonging to the group: Sources of authority include the ancestors, religious leaders, scriptures, laws, custom, consensus, perception, inference, and so forth. When examining the source of religious authority, it is important not to remain at the most general level such as "Christianity." Sub-traditions such as Roman Catholicism make their own adjustments. Roman Catholics acknowledge three sources of authority: scripture and tradition (teachings handed down by successors of the Apostles), and the Church's magisterium (papal interpretation of scripture and tradition). For Quakers, on the other hand, the "meeting" has authority because of guidance from individual experience and scripture (and thus from the Holy Spirit), although some meetings place more emphasis on scripture than experience.

The COU relies for authority not only on carefully selected biblical texts but also, ironically, on gnostic[58] and other esoteric texts that biblical leaders, both Jewish and Christian, rejected during the process of canonization.[59] Of greatest interest to members of the COU are ancient texts that seem to legitimate the use of marijuana (or other drugs) to attain ecstatic or contemplative experiences. The unifying theme is widespread use of drugs in religious contexts except for Judaism and Christianity. Those religions have presumably suppressed its once-common use (along with the worship of goddesses).

The COU has found several modern sources of authority. One of these is Chris Bennett, who has written several books (Kaneh Bosem: Cannabis in the Ancient World; Green Gold the Tree of Life: Marijuana, Magic and Religion; Sex, Drugs, Violence in the Bible) and articles (mainly in Cannabis Culture: Marijuana Magazine). Another modern source is Carl Anton Paul Ruck, an academic, who writes about the widespread use of drugs in the ancient Mediterranean world – that is, precedents for their use in the modern world.

In this regard, the COU definitely does not qualify as the purveyor of a religious worldview. Accepting religious authority means accepting beliefs and practices that do not necessarily coincide, after all, with convenience; religious people do things – due to divine commandments, for example, and enforced by divine punishments—that they might not do otherwise.[60] Moreover, the COU does not advocate the recovery of all customs from the ancient or foreign sources that it cites; it advocates only those that support its own pre-conceived beliefs and practices. Nor does it advocate obedience to all biblical passages; the Bible is merely one source among many for passages that seem to legitimate the use of drugs. As for the modern sources, they hardly represent a consensus among historians or other scholars on the history of drugs in religion. There is no real authority here, religious or otherwise.

(10) Religious worldviews are successful enough to <u>endure</u> for a long time: Most "world" religions have endured for centuries or millennia. Scholars classify "new religions"[61] as either recently developed or recently imported (since the 1960s according to most scholars). Both "new religions" and "new religious movements" replaced the word "cults," which had pejorative connotations.[62] Descriptions of these groups reveal the heavy influence of secularism, albeit to varying degrees. We prefer to call these "hybrid worldviews." One of these was the COU, which Tucker and Baldasaro founded in 1969. It is a hybrid worldview with a very thin religious veneer, we will argue in the next section, and a lot of secular ones.

Evaluation: We began by taking COU statements at face value to ensure adequate description from the perspective of "insiders." Of the ten characteristic features that we associate with religious worldviews, the COU shows at least some evidence, no matter how minimal, of five (4, 5, 6, 7, and 8); no evidence at all of four (1, 2, 3, and 9) and the possibility of one (10). We would expect all groups that claim religious status to qualify more than minimally in most categories, although not all would emphasize the same ones. One group might score **high** on the supernatural, for instance, but low on ritual (examples of which would include many long-established Protestant churches). Another might score high on comprehensive way of life but low on the visual arts (an example of which would be Orthodox Judaism). But there are low scores and low scores, as it were. **Any group that scores low enough in most categories to be considered minimal and lacks other categories altogether is <u>not</u> a religious worldview.**

The COU as a hybrid worldview

Do claims of the COU add up then to a hybrid worldview—which is to say, one that combines religious and secular features?[63] The COU's websites present <u>religious</u> information, to be sure, but also with <u>secular</u> information such as Canadian (secular) law and even includes extensive discussions of court cases on religious freedom. Because New Age is among the most widespread hybrid worldviews, we will focus on that in this section. We will compare the COU, in other words, to New Age as a case study of the hybrid worldview. We rely here on studies by sociologists of religion, especially Lorne Dawson, who have searched for patterns. We have selected and arranged the following diagnostic features on our own, however, to facilitate comparison with those of religious worldviews.

(1) New Agers presuppose supernatural dimensions or ultimate experiences, but these are <u>less transcendent</u> than those of religious worldviews: According to Dawson, New Age notions of the supernatural primarily connote spiritual energy, spiritual power, or sacredness of the self. Some claim functional relations with the spirit world. Common techniques include meditation, yoga, channeling,

aromatherapy, the reading of auras, telepathic contract with other people or even civilizations. Some scholars have classified New Age, paradoxically, as a "transcendent humanism"[64] because of its focus on "peak experiences" within the natural order. New Agers emphasize intuition, feelings, and the "inner voice."[65] On the other hand, New Agers refer to utopian and worldly ways of bringing about collective and radical transformations of nature—including human nature—that will save the world from environmental, nuclear, and other disasters (although some combine these secular ideas, paradoxically, with religious ideas of radical transcendence from the world through salvation or enlightenment).

COU websites refer not only to both God and Goddess (emphasizing the former) but also to spiritual energy and power. Moreover, they refer to intense personal experiences due to marijuana. These intense personal experiences could be more like peak experiences within the human realm than encounters with beings from a transcendent world. "When I want to calm my world," says Tucker, "the immediate habitation of my soul, marijuana has a calming influence. And when I want to direct my thoughts internally, it has the ability to allow me to direct my thoughts where I want to without interference from negative force."[66] On a similarly worldly note he says that the experience makes him "feel as though life is worth living. When I look around I know I have something to do to make it better for my fellow brothers and sisters."[67] Similarly, Sufian Kharaghani mentions feeling peaceful, being connected to others, being open to "consciousness and free will."

Moreover, these sites do not link the experiences with specific discussions of salvation or enlightenment—or even with a spiritual path that requires seekers to take specific steps—and visitors can therefore find no evidence of behavioral transformation. Consider the early Christians. Conversion to Christianity before it became the state religion of Rome often led directly to self-sacrifice. Martyrdom was certainly transformative from their point of view not only because it demonstrated a worldview to other potential converts but also because it brought martyrs into the Kingdom of God. Scripture itself mandated this transformative behavior, moreover, because Christ himself was the archetypal and ultimate martyr. Hindus choose from three paths to enlightenment: action, devotion, and knowledge; Buddhists follow the eightfold path, which combines ethics and meditation.

The closest that the COU comes to behavioral transformation is guiding members to utopia, and the rhetoric is very secular. "As the forest of hemp grew, so too did Reverend Tucker's vision, planted firmly in the earth of Clearwater Abbey. 'I want to save the world,' he said, "and I'm ready to start right here in Canada."[68]

In this regard, therefore, the COU presents even thinner evidence for either supernatural encounters or ultimate experiences than New Age does. The church does not link marijuana experiences specifically with either, although most New

Age groups do. Although New Age worldviews have become less transcendental than traditional religious ones, they still refer to enlightenment, or at least the hope of it, and paths that lead to it. By contrast, the COU refers only to a better life in this world. Lacking a transformative religious goal, of course, it provides no communal setting to achieve one.

(2) New Agers discuss paradoxes and existential questions, but these discussions are much thinner than those of religious worldviews: . Discussions of existential questions might occur in the COU, but no one has yet embedded them in primary forms such as myth or scripture, let alone the arts or other secondary forms.

In this regard, the COU is even thinner than New Age. Members of he church might discuss personal problems or communal problems, but they do not place these discussions into any larger context of ultimate meaning or purpose—that is, existential ones.

(3) New Age groups use eclectic symbol systems, which can undermine coherence: They rely on sources such as Western or Eastern esoteric traditions, mainstream religions, environmental movements, or political movements. New Age groups that use Asian sources include Transcendental Meditation, Elan Vital (formerly the Divine Light Mission), the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the Osho Foundation,[69] Soka Gakkai, and Shambhala.[70] New Age groups that use Western sources—either esoteric or occult ones—include Wicca, Hermetic Orthodoxy, and the Church of Satan. Some New Age groups use not only Eastern and Western sources but also aboriginal ones. This eclecticism makes New Age tolerant but also relativistic. And the COU is very much like New Age in this way (as in many other ways).

It is extremely eclectic, drawing on references not only from Western sources (biblical and extra-biblical texts, for instance, or tales of the Knights Templar and Freemasons) but also from miscellaneous other sources (ancient Near Eastern, ancient Indian, and Amerindian). One website lists the words for marijuana in various languages and regions.[71] Given the distinctive worldview that supports each tradition, the result of mixing them all together and accepting any reference to a hallucinogenic drug, often by resorting to tendentious interpretations, can hardly be coherent.

In this regard, the COU is even more eclectic and less coherent than many New Age groups. Again, we conclude that its veneer of religiosityis even thinner than that of New Age.

(4) New Age movements designate sacred times and spaces, but they give prominence to neither:

As we have said elsewhere, the COU refers to both. The analogy with sacred space, for instance, is clear on COU websites. In addition to Clearwater Abbey, consider Hempire Village. Loehndorf tries "to envision Tucker's plans for the place: the old age home, the schools, the recreational centres, the fields of cannabis and manufacturing lines producing cloth."[72] And Hempire Village is not the only place of interest; the goal is to "have the whole world be a space where you can create your own lifestyle and your own spirituality within the same rules that we're talking about in each one of our missions: don't hurt yourself and don't hurt anyone else."[73] In other words, places can have strong sentimental value to members of the COU in connection with either nostalgia or anticipation – or both. But the sentimental, like the aesthetic, is not synonymous with the sacred. That is because the sacred, by definition, is beyond description in physical, emotional, or intellectual terms.

In this regard, the COU is even thinner than New Age. If members of the COU do indeed experience the sacred specifically in this or that time and place, they do not make this clear on their websites.

(5) New Agers acknowledge primary features of religion such as myth, scripture, hagiography, and ritual. But these are usually ad hoc, syncretistic, or thin: Scriptures, if these exist, tend to consist of either collections of passages from the scriptures of other worldviews or collections of teachings by their own charismatic founders. New Age groups often use rituals and write hagiographies about their founders, but they tend to replace cosmogonic myths with popular versions of scientific ones.[74]

In this regard, the COU is even thinner than New Age. As we have already observed, members refer to no myths, scriptures, or hagiographies but to only a few rituals.

(6) New Agers acknowledge some secondary features of religion such as theology, philosophy, morality, law, the arts, commerce, and so on. But because some are more secular and individualistic than many religious groups, they are primarily interested in morality, law, and commerce. For some New Age groups, commerce and worldview are closely linked. This is clearly the case for Transcendental Meditation. People pay for their mantras, powerful but secret words. By reciting these inwardly, they hope to attain both worldly success and ultimate liberation. In addition, the organization runs a vast alternative-medicine business—so vast that critics have wondered if the group's primary interest is commerce.

In this regard, the COU is like New Age but even more intensely individualistic. Intense individualism[75] undermines the "nexus with religion," because community is a defining feature of every religious worldview. And community often exists in both the dimension of space (contemporaries) and that of time (not only physical and spiritual ancestors from the remote past but also physical and spiritual descendents of the remote future). Even personal piety—rosaries, blessings, meditation techniques, and so on—relies heavily on traditions that the community has passed down from one generation to the next. This explains the fact that even the greatest medieval artists of Christendom, for example, seldom signed their icons, statues, or other works of art. What mattered was their ability to provide people with venues for the experience of holiness by using the symbols and techniques that that tradition (and ecclesiastical authorities) had provided, not their personal stylistic innovations; art was a vehicle of divine grace, not a stage for the display of personal achievements.

(7) New Agers refer often to "holism," which connotes comprehensiveness. Because these movements have few secondary features, however, the word "comprehensive" is somewhat arbitrary: New Agers often refer to the "spiritual," by which they mean the experiential or the emotional. They attack "organized" religion, moreover, with its mandatory creeds, rules, rituals, formal membership, authority, and so forth. What they call "holistic," therefore, is selective. It usually conforms to the 1960s counterculture or what it spawned: environmentalism, animal rights, vegetarianism, special diets, "holistic" medicine, healing techniques such as aromatherapy, macrobiotics, and so forth.

As for the COU, "comprehensiveness" refers mainly to the many ways in which marijuana is part of the group's daily life. Its countercultural orientation had included nudity at Clearwater Abbey along with smoking marijuana, which was a common counterculture activity in the 1960s and 1970s. In the last few decades, the COU has followed other New Age trends. Consider its interest in "alternative medicine" of one kind or another. Nutrition "and the oils we use to help boost our immune systems come from the seed which in itself is delicious, healing, healthful and nutritious."[76] The COU alludes to environmentalism. According to his affidavit for the COU, Peter Styrsky believes "that cannabis has an important role in protecting the ecology of the planet. God has made us the keepers of our planet and gave us the Tree of Life to aid us in many ways."[77]

In this regard, the COU is even thinner than New Age, making only occasional allusions to broader movements.

(8) New Age groups often emerge to deliver or induce intense experiences, but these individualistic groups tend to be both amorphous and ephemeral: "When intense personal experiences are facilitated," writes Dawson, "through the auspices

of religious or quasi-religious organizations—asanas in a yoga group, an altar call in a revival service, or a guided fantasy exercise in a human potential group – the experiences may become interpreted as religious ones. The newly awakened or reborn often attribute the source of the experience to a charismatic leader or a group's Gnostic power. They are further drawn into fellowship and identification with a group that positively interprets and appreciates experiences that the everyday world discredits as deviant. While intense personal experiences contain the germ of antinomian tendencies, their first-fruits are to stimulate an identification with a community that promotes similar experiences. Thus these experiences of individual efflorescence bind communities together and encourage the perpetuation of the experiences."[78]

Sometimes these New Age groups are vaguely connected on internet web pages or blogs. The continually shifting congeries of attitudes, feelings, ideas, and archetypes or other symbols reveals a pronounced individualism. The latter emerges in connection with the personal search for meaning, purpose, or identity (often by moving from one group to another) and the preoccupation with self, choice, or experimentation. Given such a high degree of individualism, New Age groups tend to be both amorphous and ephemeral.

One could argue that the COU arose primarily to foster intense experiences by providing members with marijuana. But unlike other New Agers, members of the COU have not obviously embarked on spiritual journeys; they are not trying out various groups. Of greatest interest to them is access to marijuana. The COU is ephemeral, moreover, and very loosely organized. The internet connects various missions. In addition, it is extremely individualistic. Characteristic expressions keep appearing on COU websites: "act autonomously"; "should be performed with the needs and the traditions of the individual involved in mind"; and "even [if] a single believer is in church."

In this regard, the COU is even <u>less group oriented</u> than New Age groups, which, in turn, are less group oriented than religious worldviews. It is more a collection of individuals with some common interests than a community. By definition, a community involves more than casual or temporary encounters. Joining a real community has a price: conforming to behavioral ideals. In other words, membership has both privileges and duties. It is not merely a matter of convenience.

(9) New Agers adopt either <u>pragmatic</u> or <u>individualistic</u> attitudes to authority: In this regard, the COU has <u>even less</u> interest than New Age in religious authority. It insists only on a minimal creed and two ethical rules. In this way, too, it is very individualistic despite occasional allusions to the various levels of an institutional structure.

(10) New Age groups have <u>not yet endured</u> for a long time: Although scholars can always find antecedents, most New Age groups emerged in or after the 1960s; some have already declined or died out.

In this regard, the COU <u>has</u> endured as long as some New Age groups. Providing it with continuity have been living founders, minimal structures, and several court cases.

Evaluation: New Age combines religion and secularity. We can think of at least three reasons for this. First, it is more oriented than religious worldviews to the everyday world and less interested in the supernatural, paradoxes, existential questions, myth, scripture, rituals, sacred time, and so forth. Second, they are more eclectic than religious worldviews and therefore less coherent. Third, they focus more closely than religious worldviews on personal choice and autonomy. But the COU is even further from religion and therefore even closer to secularity than New Age. Of the ten characteristic features that we associate with New Age, the COU is thinner than New Age in nine. As for the tenth, it is like those New Age groups that have endured since the 1960s, although it might be less likely to endure than groups that have adapted in some ways to mainstream society.[79] As every minority group knows, adaptation, or "assimilation," to mainstream society always carries the risk of dissolution. To endure, these groups must have (or at least believe that they have) a very good reason to do so. Legalization of marijuana could undermine the COU's raison d'etre. If people may smoke marijuana legally, why would they bother to join a church—even one that requires only minimal conformity?]

From this, we conclude that the COU is extremely thin not only by religious but also by hybrid criteria. It is therefore it on the boundary between hybrid and <u>secular</u> worldviews (not the boundary between hybrid and religious worldviews).

The COU as a secular worldview

So far, we have rejected the COU as a religious worldview but acknowledged it as a hybrid one. We still have not considered it, however, as a secular worldview. In the first part of this analysis, we said that secular worldviews have all the characteristic features of every worldview and differ from religious ones only in the following two ways:

(1) Secular worldviews presuppose only the <u>natural or cultural order</u>: Secular humanism would, of course, be one secular worldview. "At its most articulate level," says Ninian Smart, this worldview focuses on "human beings and their creation. But it does not hold that humans survive death or have any kind of immortal nature; nor that they exist because they have been brought into being by a God ... It means that there is nothing higher than the human race ... But such

humanism is also in an important way thought to be scientific. The person who holds to this worldview believes that all true knowledge about the world is ultimately to be found through science, or at least within the framework of a scientific outlook."[80]

COU websites present a great deal of secular material about the legalization of marijuana. On one website, for instance, viewers learn that "our world is our home."[81] They can find an ad for Global Marijuana March on 5 May 2007, a poster for rights and freedoms, an ad for a book by Ed Pearson, and so on. As Pearson says, "We're launching a lawsuit. Anyone arrested during this time frame [from 1 August 2001 to 3 October 2003] can participate directly. We're asking all cannabis consumers to assist. Donate to the trust account and help us end this injustice"[82] On another website, viewers learn about current court cases—especially those involving the key figures: Tucker and Baldasaro. This page refers to a Canadian legal definition of religion. "Defined broadly," it tells visitors, "religion typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship. In essence, religion is about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to his or her self-definition and spiritual fulfillment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith."[83] To be helpful, the website underlines major features of the definition. Another page at the same website refers to statutes, legal reference materials, case law and common law, and so on.[84] The Marijuana Party of Canada's linked website presents an article called "Pot Church Busted." It describes the arrests of Tucker and Baldasaro, who "have ceaselessly advocated for the legalization and recognition of marijuana as a socially beneficial and health-giving herb."[85] Note that this page says nothing about marijuana as a "religious sacrament."

Elsewhere, visitors can read about the COU's online Universe University: "The faculty demands that students demonstrate what they learn in practical exercises: degrees are earned for preparing and defending real court cases. A doctoral degree is awarded for defending a case in Supreme Court, a complicated legal maneuver many lawyers never undertake."[86] Another type of secular material, in the form of articles from the on-line Cannabis Magazine, involves "cannabis culture."

(2) Secular worldviews acknowledge only reason in general and science in particular as the ultimate authority: Although the COU clearly emphasizes the attainment of a non-rational state of consciousness, the organization's raison d'être, it just as clearly emphasizes reason (and, to some extent, science) to argue for both the legal legitimacy and the medical safety of marijuana. Dominating its websites, in fact, are reasoned arguments that members either have used or could use in court.

Evaluation: The COU exhibits many features that are characteristic of New Age, once again, although these are very "thin" even from that perspective. Advocates do not claim, on the other hand, that reason or science trumps all other "ways of knowing." How, then, can we describe the COU's juxtaposition of New Age and obviously secular or seemingly secular material – a juxtaposition that often dominates its websites? One way is to argue that the COU is on the border between hybrid worldviews, especially New Age ones, and secular worldviews. Consider the following three analogies, all of them useful, with that in mind: (a) the swing, (b) the optical illusion, and (c) the leopard's spots.

Members of the COU can swing back and forth between a hybrid worldview (such as that of New Age) and a secular one, because those are so similar.[87] The COU is like New Age, because the latter has already taken a major step toward secularity by emphasizing the immanence of the sacred within the natural world. Some New Age groups are even more secular, because they emphasize either the psychological or the political (environmentalism, say, and feminism). On the other hand, the COU is like a secular worldview because of its emphasis on conflicts with Canadian law over buying, using, and selling of marijuana.

Now, consider the famous optical illusion in which viewers look at a picture and see either two faces looking at each other or two vases. From one point of view, the COU is hybrid and from the other point of view secular. As we say, many traditionally religious worldviews have integrated commerce, albeit as a secondary phenomenon. From one point of view, the COU's commercial activities (selling the "sacrament") look religious: selling the "sacrament" in order to support the community. From the opposing point of view, though, its commercial activities look secular: a convenient front for selling drugs. From one point of view, people join the COU in order to have experiences that they interpret as religious. From the opposing point of view, though, they do so to evade prosecution.

Finally, consider the leopard's spots. The spots do not make it a leopard. Rather, a leopard develops spots because it is a leopard. As for the COU, some of its "spots" appear to be religious, but that does not necessarily make them religious. Taking on spots does not make one a leopard.

All three analogies suggest the possibility that some members of the COU, maybe many or most, are using religion as a <u>front</u> for the secular activity of legalizing marijuana. One way to form a front involves <u>infiltration</u> of an existing institution.[88] Another kind of front involves the <u>creation</u> a religious community, not infiltrating an existing one. To look like a religion, one website reminds members that the "Assembly recognizes the mandate of its members to cover their heads and wear sacred head gear such as a ... Yarmulke, as required by their religious beliefs, and especially in any association with government agencies and/or the government itself."[89] The analogy revealingly undermines its own case. Jews wear "yarmulkas" out of humility before

God, for instance, not political expediency. Leaders of the COU do so in order to look religious by reminding the courts of other religious communities, ones that have ancient traditions governing headgear.

Conclusions

We find considerable evidence that leaders of a loosely defined group within the COU, those who established the Clearwater Abbey, gradually aligned themselves with secular activists in the effort to legalize marijuana. In the process, they added more religious content in order to fit the legal definition of a religion. All members of the COU are not only aware of its legal struggle but actively spearheading it in the name of religious freedom (often because they themselves have court cases pending). It is true that the COU has maintained a minimal definition of community since the early days at Clearwater. But given the extensive legal analysis on their websites and firsthand experience in actual cases, we conclude that at least some members are consciously creating religious features in order to make their legal case for a religious exemption plausible.

We suggest that the COU either swings between an already very "thin" hybrid worldview and a secular one or that it is both hybrid and secular simultaneously. It clearly has hybrid (New Age) features, although these are minimal even by New Age standards. But it clearly has secular features, too.

Significantly, one needs only to download a free membership form and tick several boxes to indicate acceptance of its minimal creed and minimal moral code. According to one website, "all one need do is claim Membership, Missionary and/or Ministerial Calling. The Church of the Universe recognizes everyone's calling."[90]

[Need a final bottom-line thought, like: We conclude that, on an objective evaluation, the COU lacks even a minimal number of the features that characterize bona fide religious worldviews Rather, we conclude that the COU is a hybrid worldview. And the border is with secularity, not religiosity

[1] It is known also as the Assembly of the Church/University of the Universe.

[2] Before proceeding, we must make it clear that neither end of this continuum is likely to be an actual phenomenon. Each is much more likely to be an "ideal type," an abstraction that represents the most extreme form of a phenomenon that occurs closer to one end or the other. But appearances can be deceiving. Phenomena that seem self-evidently "religious" at one level (such as rituals that occur in special buildings and at special times), for instance, might actually function as secular phenomena at a deeper level (such as activities—those that promote social justice, group therapy, or ethnicity—that could take place in any other setting).

By contrast, phenomena that seem self-evidently "secular" at one level (productions such as popular movies and television shows) might be religious at a deeper level (productions that rely ultimately on ancient symbols).

[3] "World religions" are mainly religious worldviews that developed either during or after state formation. The latter was a political, economic, and cultural process that occurred during the Axial Age (from the 9th century to the 2nd) in the Mediterranean world, South Asia, and East Asia. One result was the rise of large-scale societies. As a secondary process, it continued over the next few millennia. One late example would be the unification of the Arabian tribes into a state under Islam in the seventh century. World religions include Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Islam. Some religious worldviews, among those that developed as reform movements (such as Sikhism and Bahai), now claim the status of "world religions."

[4] "Primal" religions are the traditional religious worldviews of small-scale societies—that is, aboriginal ones—in any place and at any time. Their economic systems generally rely on hunting-and-gathering or horticulture. Their political systems generally rely on tribal elders or on leaders who are "first among equals." Many of these "primal religions" have by now come into contact with "world religions" and either adjusted to them or been absorbed by them.

[5] See Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 1: 12. This Protestant theologian, usually ranked as one of the last century's greatest, did not foresee that anyone would interpret "ultimate concern" in a trite way, reducing "faith" to nothing more than psychology or sociology.

[6] That said, our definition is similar to those of others in our field. It corresponds quite closely to that of Ninian Smart, for instance, who pioneered in the academic study of religion. He began with academic positions in the United Kingdom and ended up as the J.F. Rowny Professor in the Comparative Study of Religions at the University of California (Santa Barbara). In 2000, he was president of the American Academy of Religion, which attracts to its annual meeting over ten thousand scholars from all over the world. Smart identified seven dimensions of religion: ritual; narrative and mythic; experiential and emotional; social and institutional; ethical and legal; doctrinal and philosophical; and material (Ninian Smart, Worldviews: Cross-cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (New York: Scribner's 1983). Most of these characteristics overlap with ours. We differ from Smart, it is true, but mainly because he conflated "religion" with "worldview" and therefore also with "secularity." We, on the other hand, distinguish religious worldviews from both secular ones and hybrid ones. By doing so, we have tried to refine Smart's approach and account for comparative data.

[7] For Roman Catholics, therefore, the "secular clergy" are neither indifferent nor hostile to religion; they simply live and work – as bishops, priests, and deacons – among laypeople in the parishes. The "regular clergy," by contrast, live according to a monastic rule (from the Latin regulum); they live and work in monasteries or convents and thus (at least to some extent) apart from laypeople.

[8] Nature includes human nature, of course, which is genetically programmed to produce culture.

[9] Charles Taylor, "Multiculturalism and Spirituality in a Secular Age," plenary speech, 17th International Conference on Palliative Care, Montreal, 23-26 September 2008.

[10] We arrange hybrid worldviews on a continuum: those that are close to traditional worldviews but with a few adjustments to modernity and secularity (such as using the mass media for proselytism); those that are experimental and eclectic, drawing on both religion and secularity; and those that are close to secular worldviews.

[11] Lorne L. Dawson, Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 47.

[12] We can distinguish the supernatural from the natural in various ways (such as immanence within it) or deny the natural's existence (if the material realm is an illusion).

[13] [Toronto Assembly] "I Am the God Force," [undated], Church of the Universe [visited:] 24 February 2009, churchoftheuniverse.ca/iamgod.html.

[14] The Assembly of the Church/University of the Universe [visited:] 24 February 2009, iamm.com [Membership].

[15] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions].

[16] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Beliefs and Sacraments: Goddess Cunti].

[17] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Sacrament-al Tree of Life: Sacred].

[18] Sufian Kharaghani, Affidavit, at para. 6; Queen v. Shahrooz Khargaghani, Sufian Kharagani, Zenon Michael, Joshua Pothiers, Peter Styrsky and Daniel Ora Walker (Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region).

[19] Shahrooz Kharagani, Affidavit, at para. 5 and 6; Queen v. Shahrooz Khargaghani, Sufian Kharagani, Zenon Michael, Joshua Pothiers, Peter Styrsky and Daniel Ora Walker (Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region).

[20] Assembly [The Wall].

[21] Dan Loehndorf, The Canadian Inquisition: The Creation of Hempire Village: Church of the Universe: Part II: The 1990's" Cannabis Culture Magazine # 10-November/December 1997 iamm.com/belief.htm.

[22] Assembly [Wo-Man's Auxiliary].

[23] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Nine Pointed Star].

[24] The prototypical menorah was a lamp with seven branches, which stood in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Hanukkah menorah has either nine branches for candles or nine cups for oil.

[25] The fish became a Christian symbol, because the letters of the Greek word for fish form an acrostic for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

[26] The four arms of a Celtic cross are usually equal in length (as the arms of this one are); intersecting with the cross is a circle.

[27] Assembly [The Children of Sumer: In the Beginning].

[28] Assembly [The Wall].

[29] For the sake of clarity, we have distinguished sharply between "secular people" and "religious people," but that is an oversimplification in one way. Some secular people become religious, after all, and some religious people become secular. And the shift from secular to religious sometimes occurs quite suddenly.

[30] [Toronto Assembly].

[31] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Official Church Holidays].

[32] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Mandate of the Church].

[33] Dan Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition," [dated:] 1997, Cannabis Culture Magazine, [visited:] 20 July 2009, iamm.com/belief.htm. The print version was Cannabis Culture Magazine 9 (Summer 1997).

[34] Dan Loehndorf, "Dreams of a Hemp Based Community," [dated:] January 1995, Cannabis Culture, [visited:] 20 July 2009, cannabisculture.com/backissues/jan95/community.htm; listed on the Assembly's website as Cannabis Culture Magazine 1.5 (1995). This is now an exclusively on-line publication. It originated, however, as a print publication (on paper made from hemp) with an on-line version. The print version began as Marijuana and Hemp Magazine (which included Loehndorf's article in the fifth issue of its first volume), then became Cannabis Canada, and finally became Cannabis Culture Magazine.

[35] Loehndorf, "The Canadian Inquisition: The Creation of Hempire Village," Cannabis Culture Magazine 10 (November-December 1997).

[36] Christopher Harvey Lawson, Affidavit at para. 3.1; Queen v. Shahrooz Khargaghani, Sufian Kharagani, Zenon Michael, Joshua Pothiers, Peter Styrsky and Daniel Ora Walker (Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region).

[37] Loehndorf, "Dreams."

[38] Sufian Kharagani, at para. 15.

[39] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Mandate of the Church].

[40] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Sacraments and Terminologies: Hand Fasting].

[41] Loehndorf, "Dreams."

[42] Lawson, at para. 3.2.

[43] Assembly [Church Credo].

[44] Assembly [Abridged Theological Discussion].

[45] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Mandate of the Church: Church Mandate].

[46] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Mandate of the Church: Church Mandate].

[47] Peter Styrsky, Affidavit, at para. 14; Queen v. Shahrooz Khargaghani, Sufian Kharagani, Zenon Michael, Joshua Pothiers, Peter Styrsky and Daniel Ora Walker (Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region).

[48] Experts have found it hard to define "religion," "culture," "art," and several other universal features of human experience. Art, for instance, covers a lot of territory. Complicating matters has been the avant-garde notion of art, which emerged in the late nineteenth century among radical painters – those who rejected conventional styles (which meant rejection by those who promoted them)—and has since become the standard definition in the elite cultures of modern or modernizing societies. A work of visual art, for instance, must (1) be innovative in some way; (2) clearly represent the personal vision of one individual and thus exemplify self-expression; and (3) involve either a critique of society or an experiment in visual perception (art for art's sake). But this definition of art has several serious disadvantages. For one thing, it has tended to make art esoteric and therefore inaccessible to most people. Moreover, it excludes almost all of Western art before the twentieth century and almost all non-Western art. Even though earlier periods in the history of both Western and other cultures valued innovative works, for instance, they did not value innovation as an end in itself; they merely valued superior realizations of traditional goals (in the West, more effective access to the saints on icons or more effective imitations of natural forms). These traditional goals, varying considerably from one culture to another, have included transmitting information in symbolic form about the environment, glorifying regimes or elite lineages, edifying viewers by encouraging them to contemplate moral, theological, or philosophical traditions, adding beauty to everyday life, and so on. Finally, the avant-garde definition of art excludes popular culture even in modern Western societies. From that point of view, most movies and television shows are either "bad art" or something other (and less worthy) than art. Even though the boundary between "good art" from "bad art" is notoriously subjective, it is preferable to overly broad definitions (such as the one that would define the arts simply as visual, literary, or musical forms of communication). From our point of view, "good art" has (at the very least) a powerful effect on people; "bad art" has (at most) a weak effect on people.

[49] Assembly [Art Gallery].

[50] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Sacrament-al Tree of Life: Sacred].

[51] These traditions do not acknowledge the secular, but they must, of course, acknowledge the existence of people, including government officials, who claim to be secular in the sense of non-religious.

[52] Even though Jews do not actually handle money on holy days, moreover, contemporary rabbis often ask for donations during festival liturgies. Pledging donations to the synagogue or to other communal causes is contrary to the spirit of halakhah though not the letter, which forbids only the physical handling of coins. Many Jews try to justify financial pledges on holy days, however, in pragmatic terms; many Jews do not show up in synagogue, after all, except on those days.

[53] The Protestant attitude toward worldly vocations, to the world itself, is much more complicated than a response to one biblical story. For the pioneering work on Protestantism in relation to capitalism, see Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Scribner, 1930).

[54] Matthew 21.12.

[55] Lawson, Affidavit, at para. 2.3.

[56] Shahrooz Kharagani, at para. 7.

[57] Assembly [Memberships].

[58] Gnosticism was not a single religion but a religious outlook that took many forms during the Greco-Roman period and influenced both Judaism and Christianity – although both traditions reacted against it eventually. Among the defining features of gnosticism was its metaphysical opposition between "flesh," or matter (which is evil) and spirit (which is good). From this, it followed that the ultimate goal is to escape from the material world into some spiritual one. Both Jews and Christians, who believe that the material world is a venue for divine action, found it necessary to reject gnostic ideas.

[59] Some feminist groups, too, try to combine Judaism or Christianity with alien beliefs and practices. In fact, they often turn to the same ones as members of the COU in their attempts to restore and re-legitimate points of view that Judaism or Christianity has "suppressed." Feminists focus on pagan or other religions that have fostered goddess worship and thus affirm "women's spirituality." Members of the COU focus on pagan or other religions that have fostered the use of drugs to attain ecstatic experiences. Very often, they turn to the very same sources.

[60] From time to time, history records the rise of antinomians—that is, those who oppose legal or other constraints as barriers to deep insight. Often, these are the founders of new religious worldviews. Even so, disciples soon begin to introduce structures and rules in order to establish communities and thus perpetuate the teachings of their founders. Eventually, moreover, entropy

sets in; traditions tend to become conventional, rigid, or legalistic. In those cases, antinomian reformers sometimes appear.

[61] Dawson, Cults, 10-13.

[62] Dawson, Cults, 1-39.

[63] Hybrid worldviews, which combine features of both religious worldviews and secular ones, can take many forms. The one of greatest interest here is "New Age," a shifting congeries of groups that concern themselves with personal growth in both the physical and psychological senses. Whatever the particular emphasis, each is combines environmental conservation, healthy food, and "spirituality" from several sources.

A very common form of interaction between religion and secularity involves politics. When that involves political movements such as nationalism or feminism, we call the result "ideology." Political ideologies function in most ways as religions, although they lack the defining feature of religion, the one feature that only religious worldviews provide: access to the sacred (number 4 on our list), and are thus secular worldviews. For the characteristic features of ideology in general and ideological feminism in particular, see Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001) 194-233.

But when politics involves the state, we call the result "civil religion." This is a publicly affirmed symbol system that celebrates the nation and therefore legitimates the state that represents that nation. It might or might not coincide with specific traditional religions. The British civil religion clearly does. Presiding over it, after all, is an established religion: the Church of England. Its original political function, legitimating the monarchy and its political power, lapsed long ago due to the development of parliament. Its current function is not only to celebrate national continuity but also to legitimate religious tolerance. The American civil religion coincides with a specific religious tradition, too, but not as explicitly as the British one. It originated in Europe as an intentionally vague form of Protestantism known as Deism. Most Americans found Deism acceptable as a unifying force in public life, because it was compatible with more specifically Protestant (and even Catholic or Jewish) doctrines. Demographic changes due to massive immigration and secularization, however, now require the abolition of even the vaguest references to God, the Bible, the Ten Commandments, and so on. The American civil religion's function is still to celebrate national unity but to do so more thoroughly than ever before, which explains the recent addition of Martin Luther King Day. The Canadian civil religion, which originated as a version of the British one (adapted to play, as it were, in Quebec), now relies not on an implicitly religious worldview but on an explicitly secular one known as "multiculturalism" (although it occasionally allows symbolic expressions of religions in the name of "diversity.") But civil religion does not occur only in the West (much less the modern West). In the past, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians had ritually legitimated rulers and expected them to uphold those religious worldviews or more general symbol systems that legitimated religious tolerance. Not all civil religions are benign. Consider the civil religion of Nazi Germany. Every year in Nuremberg, the state celebrated Parteitag (Party Day). This took the form of a religious festival (and pilgrimage for out-of-towners) with elaborate liturgical processions, bloodstained relics for use in consecrating new flags, hymns such as the "Horst Wessel Lied," and the presence of Germany's charismatic leader. Another civil religion

emerged in Communist countries such as the Soviet Union and China. The Chinese version relied on elaborate liturgical processions, Mao's "little red book" as the functional equivalent of scripture, and something like the charismatic leader's apotheosis after death). Both civil religions used implicitly religious forms (such as rituals) for explicitly secular functions.

Like the state, moreover, the ethnic community can develop a civil religion. These, too, might or might not coincide with traditional religions. One example would be the hybrid Jewish "civil religion," which is explicitly secular (associating Jewish identity not with the Torah but with the Nazi Holocaust and the State of Israel) but implicitly religious (with rabbis among the communal leaders who preside over public ceremonies, often in synagogues, to commemorate the Holocaust and celebrate the State of Israel). In itself, this is not rabbinic Judaism. Some participants are religious Jews, but most are secular Jews.

Another form of interaction between religion and secularity involves modernizing religious communities. These often maintain traditional symbols at the explicit level, at least to some extent, but either reinterpret or modify them in connection with modernity (or "relevance") at the implicit level. Some liberal churches, for instance, focus very heavily on secular activities such as social activism, community building, group therapy, and so on (all of which are compatible with Christianity but not religious per se). Some evangelical churches, on the other hand, focus very heavily on self-realization or even prosperity. Non-Orthodox Jews, on the other hand, often focus on ethnicity (known as "Jewishness" or "Jewish peoplehood"). Although hybridity has influenced some religions, it has not influenced all of them to the same degree. Many immigrants are intent on preserving the "authenticity" of their religious traditions, after all, precisely to prevent disintegration.

Yet another form of interaction between religion and secularity involves popular culture. The latter is a very broad category. One aspect of it is entertainment: productions such as movies and television shows. Under analysis, these reveal underlying patterns of thought and perception that have emerged directly from religious traditions. In the West, for instance, these are often about topics such as origin and destiny, good and evil, guilt and healing, coming of age, and the self-sacrifice of "Christ figures"). Popular culture provides one way of bringing these topics into the public square, therefore, without breaking down the separation of church and state. To the extent that they express widespread worldviews—and they do—movies and television shows reflect hybrid worldviews. They do in many (but not all) ways for secular societies, or ostensibly secular societies, what traditional stories do for religious ones. Nathanson has analyzed one case study: The Wizard of Oz. This movie is explicitly secular (containing no references at all, for instance, to God) but implicitly religious (recapitulating basic patterns of thought that originated in biblical religion—Nathanson refers specifically to Dorothy's "going home" and "growing up" in connection with the Jewish and Christian notion of returning to paradise—and has become deeply embedded in American culture). See Paul Nathanson, Over the Rainbow: The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

Another aspect of popular culture, however, involves psychology – that is, pop psychology. This phenomenon, Nathanson argues elsewhere, spontaneously revealed itself dramatically after the death of Princess Diana. The result intertwined religious and secular features so closely that it is difficult to separate them. The funeral itself took place in St. Paul's Cathedral and was therefore explicitly Christian. Other events were religious in a derived or historical sense. These included prayers addressed to Diana as if she were an established saint or even the Virgin Mary, setting up memorial shrines with flowers and candles, and making

pilgrimages to her tomb at Althorp. On the secular side, however, was Diana's worldly life as a fashionable celebrity (albeit a charitable one). More important was (and is) the underlying content of this worldview: neo-romanticism (the celebration of emotion as an end in itself), which remains prevalent due to the efforts of Oprah Winfrey and similar cultural authorities in connection with personal growth. See Paul Nathanson, "I Feel, Therefore I Am: The Princess of Passion and the Implicit Religion of Our Time," Implicit Religion, 2.2 (1999): 59-87.

[64] Lorne L. Dawson, "Anti-modernism, Modernism, and Postmodernism: Struggling with the Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements," Sociology of Religion, 59.2 (Summer 1998): 131-151.

[65] "[Donald] Stone points to the evidence of the emergence in American society of a greater interest and trust in personal experience, intuition, holistic views, and syncretistic perspectives in fields of endeavor as diverse as medicine and business, not to mention the rapidly expanding market in humanistic and self-help psychological books on everything from being the first-born child to facing death with dignity" (Dawson, Cults, 186). The hippies, for instance, focused on worldliness and pleasure: recreational drugs, nudity, free sex, and so on.

[66] Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition," 9.

[67] Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition," 9.

[68] Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition," 9.

[69] Formerly the Rajneesh Foundation.

[70] Formerly Vajradhatu.

[71] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Terms of Endearment for God's Tree of life].

[72] Loehndorf, "Dreams."

[73] Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition,"

[74] Dawson, Cults, 187.

[75] By "intense individualism," we refer to a recent phenomenon. Both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment valued individualism, to be sure, but within a larger communal context—one that assumed responsibility for others. At the moment, possibly as a result of unfettered capitalism since the nineteenth century, individualism has taken on a very different connotation. Consider the "objectivist" philosophy of Ayn Rand. (See her treatise, The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism [New York: American Library, 1964]). Her protagonist in The Fountainhead, for instance, is heroic precisely because of his indifference to public opinion and, by implication, public need; the colossal towers that he designs are monuments to his own personal vision, attained by disregarding any other factors, not to any interest in serving the public. Not all modern modern artists in general or modern architects in particular would

consider themselves objectivists, but most of them would surely agree with her notion of the artist as a lonely fighter against artistic or even social and political conformity. Influencing Rand herself, no doubt, was the romantic vision of artists as "bohemian" rebels against "bourgeois" society.

[76] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Sacrament-al Tree of Life: Sacred].

[77] Peter Styrsky, Affidavit, at para. 9; Queen v. Shahrooz Khargaghani, Sufian Kharagani, Zenon Michael, Joshua Pothiers, Peter Styrsky and Daniel Ora Walker (Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region).

[78] Dawson, Cults, 185-186; citing Donald Stone, "New Religious Consciousness and Personal Religious Experience," Sociological Analysis 39.2 (1978): 126).

[79] Eileen Barker has analyzed features of successful groups. She finds that they have bureaucracies, middle aged members, children, traditional authority, elaborate belief systems, interpretive mechanisms, liberalism, and behavior that aligns with the norms in mainstream society. See Eileen Barker, "Plus ca change ..." Social Compass 42. 2: (1995): 165-80; cited in Dawson, Cults, 34-35.

[80] Smart 53.

[81] "I Am the God Force ..." [undated], Church of the Universe [visited:] 20 July 2009, churchoftheuniverse.ca/iamgod.html.

[82] [Advertisement for] Ed Pearson's Never Plead Guilty: A Self-Defence Guide for the Cannabis Culture, [undated], Church of the Universe [visited:] 20 July 2009, churchoftheuniverse.ca/rights.html.

[83] Assembly [List of Current Court Cases: Case three: Reference: Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys, 2006 SCC 6].

[84] Assembly [Legal Self Defense]]

[85] "Pot Church Busted" [dated:] 25 April 2008, Marijuana Party of Canada [visited:] 20 July 2009, marijuanaparty.ca/article.php3?id_article=406.

[86] Loehndorf, "Canadian Inquisition,"

[87] According to James Beckford, "religious and spiritual forms of sentiment, belief and action have survived as relatively autonomous resources. They retain the capacity to symbolize, for example, ultimate meaning, infinite power, supreme indignation and sublime compassion. And they can be deployed in the service of virtually any interest-group or ideal: not just organizations with specifically religious objectives."[87] In other words, they can swing between religious and secular orientations.

Psychological movements, for instance, swing back and forth between "transcendental psychology" and the American "human potential movement." Examples include Erhard Seminar Training (which uses the Latin verb est, to be, as its acronymn), Scientology, Psychosynthesis, and Silva Mind-Control. Many people today use the word "spirituality" to describe vaguely similar but ultimately secular activities (such as self-actualization in a purely psychological sense or ecological preservation in a purely material sense). Appearance notwithstanding in some cases, this phenomenon is often very remote from religion. It is a kind of frontierland that reduces religion to psychology or even sentiment.

Environmental movements swing between hybrid worldviews that focus on the sanctity of nature and those that focus on the need for planetary rescue. These include eco-feminism and Wicca.

Political movements can swing between the secular and the religious. Some secular feminists draw from their political movement both personal and communal meaning, purpose, and identity. The result is a feminist civil religion, which combines explicit secularity (books, for instance, that are either indifferent or hostile to religion as a "patriarchal" conspiracy against women) and implicit religiosity (books that have taken on quasi-canonical status such as Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, or Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex). Some days have become the functional equivalents of holy days (such as 6 December, in Canada, which commemorates Marc Lépine's murder of fourteen "feminists" in Montreal). Some events, moreover, have become the functional equivalents of liturgies (such as memorial services on 6 December, which often rely on fourteen candles in imitation of the six candles that Jews use to commemorate the Nazi holocaust, and distribute pink ribbons as if they were communion wafers). And some places become the functional equivalents of pilgrimage sites (such as the park in Vancouver that honors Lépine's fourteen victims). The feminist civil religion overlaps with some national ones. Canada, for instance, gives official recognition to 6 December, often sending political leaders to its memorial services. By contrast, some forms of Wicca and "goddess religion" promote explicitly religious visits to ancient goddess shrines or explicitly religious full-moon rituals but are implicitly secular (focusing on women's "empowerment"

Popular science movements such as Transhumanism, too, can swing between secularism (neo-rationalism which glorifies science as distinct from neo-romanticism which glorifies feeling) and religion (with its goal of eliminating death and thus achieving immortality).

[88] The Marxists provided a classic example by infiltrating an American black movement. In the early 1930s, American Communists wanted more black members and approached a black preacher in Harlem. Father Divine, who had already organized his International Peace Mission on socialist lines, was indeed interested in an alliance on matters of shared interest such as social equality and economic cooperatives. But the Communists really wanted more than that. They wanted to infiltrate the black church, gradually, and thus to re-educate and politicize its members as serious Communists. When they asked Father Divine to support a booklet called "Thirteen Communists Speak to the Court," he protested and cut all ties with them.

Two more recent examples are worth noting here. Some Goddess feminists have tried to infiltrate liberal Christian communities. They use the rhetoric of "reform" as a front for what amounts to revolution[88]--that is, adding a goddess in all but name to Christian theology and reinterpreting Christian scripture to show that the historic tradition has suppressed this goddess and thus oppressed women.[88] Similarly, some fundamentalist Muslims have tried to infiltrate traditional mosques and charitable organizations. Their mission in European countries is to

encourage assimilated or assimilation-bound young Muslims to become terrorists. One case focused on Abu Hamza al-Masri, the imam of a mosque near London's Finsbury Park. Everyone knew that he was delivering "inflammatory and highly political" speeches, and some members of the community worried about him. But few of them knew that he was using charitable donations to fund terrorists and using the mosque itself to train his followers in the use of weapons. Eventually, in 2003, police raided the mosque in connection with a terrorist plot. Three years later, a court sentenced the imam to seven years in jail for inciting murder and even race war. Dissenting members of the community (and many British Muslims) claimed that he had perverted Islam—that is, used it as a front for immoral and illegal activities. They reclaimed their mosque, which now makes a great effort to promote Islam as a religion that fosters tolerance and peace.

[89] Assembly [Frequently Asked Questions: Beliefs and Worship].

[90] Assembly [Memberships].