

DRUG BASED RELIGIONS AND CONTEMPORARY DRUG TAKING

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Contemporary drug taking and giving among the general populace are multi-level phenomena involving highly vicarious origins, needs and/or other supporting social, psychological or spiritual functions.

Within this, a specific subgroup has emerged promoting a variety of (drug-based) religions, spiritual doctrines or ethical systems.

Dividing such drug-based organizations into two categories of moral/ethical posture—the situational and the iconic/deterministic—a review of each catechism, ethical base and (when applicable) ritual practice is reviewed and annotated.

Introduction

This study began as a psycho-social, ethical and literary study of several drug-inspired religious groups—most notably among these being *The Native American Church*; *The True Inner Light Temple*; *The Peyote Way Church*; *The Church of the Tree of Life*; *The Neo-American Church*; *The Church of the Psychedelic Mystic*; *The New American Church*; and *The Fane of the Psilocybin Mushroom*.

While the study is still this primarily, it has also, inevitably, become a study of human behavioral extremism and in some cases ideological/ethical reform resultant from, or in connection to, specific drug usages.

While focusing primarily on contemporary motifs, it is important to note at the offset that drug-inspired religious worship has undoubtedly been a part (albeit a sometimes hidden or suppressed part) of human spiritual experience for thousands of years. The 2,000 year-old-Aztec sacred mushroom referred to as "God's Flesh"; the Soma of the Hindus; the Haoma (hemp) of the Zoroastrians; the Benzoin of Southeast Asia; the Pituri of the Australian Aborigini; the Eleusian Kykeon; Zen's fifth cup of tea which purifies, and whose sixth "calls to the realm of the immortals"; all only begin a list of more well-known sacramental examples.

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McKenna and McKenna (1975), Silverman (1967) and others have elaborated on such tentative studies with the suggestion that when not available exogenously for religious use (as in the Siberian Chuckchee's uses of the hallucinogenic *Amanita muscaria* mushroom, for instance) such "theme" sacramental drugs might somehow be temporarily created within the body of the religious aspirant itself through some as yet unknown process. Modern psychiatric and pharmaceutical research into manic-depressive psychosis and schizophrenia also point to the body's ability to create, endogenously, reality altering compounds or chemicals.

This is not, however, to say or imply that similar or even identical changes in perception could not be produced or arrived at without such pathological or other idiosyncratic forms of neurochemistry.

According to social and religious scholars (Jung, 1973; St. John of the Cross, 1577; Tart, 1969), the experience *itself* of perceptual or self-image distortion, or "madness," whether pathologically, mystically or otherwise based, can often lie as one of the crucible roots which actually must precede—as part of a process—psychological integration, spiritual illumination, grace, or redemption in a host of self-actualizing conjugative or other religious traditions.

Curiously enough, and perhaps more relevantly to the point of this investigation, a temporary range of similar, parallel and even identical states of altered consciousness have been known to occur under special circumstances through the ingestion and use of a special class of drugs or chemical compounds called collectively psychedelics, psycholytics, or psychotomimetics (Grof, 1980; Grinspoon and Bakalar, 1979). Such substances include Mescaline, LSD-25, DMT, Peyote, MDA, STP, and others.

So far as collected scientific research, a variety of ontological paradigms have been incorporated over the years in an attempt to intelligently map, study, and correlate the diverse effects of these controversial compounds (Einstein, 1980; Josephson and Carroll, 1974).

A perhaps exemplary piece in this area would be *Social and Religious Attitudes Toward Drug-Induced Religious Experience* by James Bakalar (1985). This article comments on the ambiguity of the psychedelic experience and the peculiarities of modern social response to it. The author discusses three kinds of attitudes toward religious tradition described by Peter Berger. These are, roughly, materialist reductionism, defense of the purity of an orthodox faith, and religion as personal experiences given form and meaning by traditional interpretation. The effects of psychedelic drugs are used by some to discredit both drugs and religion; by others to discredit drugs while justifying a certain definition of religion; and by still others to accept drug taking as one mode of religious experience broadly perceived. This last attitude, according to this piece, is the one usually taken by psychedelic drug users themselves. However, this raises the difficult question of what is definably religious about personal experiences before they are given form as doctrine, ritual, and community. In this connection, Bakalar discusses the common view of psychedelic drug taking as a foretaste or preliminary to more serious religious regimens.

Notably, in our American culture (and Western society in general) such drug-based studies seem to exist in a bi- or tri-polar way socially. Most commonly, psychedelics are used illegally for recreation by the common man in usually uncontrolled ways; and peripherally, as legally sanctioned sacraments as part of

small ethnic religions like the American Indian *Native American Church* (Aberle, 1966; Slotkin, 1956).

Admittedly, the written word—perhaps the literal form in general—usually seems to fall far short in describing any true position of ethics, let alone an ethical/moral system based in specific drug exposure. The psychedelic experience has been commonly known to be eclectic, gnostic, transpersonal in parts, and often ineffable. When known in its extremes, it has perhaps even represented authentic mysticism or spiritual effect.

Concurrently, psychedelic drug taking or giving, when in relation to either a religious or medical milieu, presents us with a number of considerations which must stand as quite distinct from the mainstay of both subjects.

Braden (1967), Gowen (1974) and Zinberg (1984) have pointed out that such obtuse drug experiences can introduce the user to forms of existential questioning or angst followed by conclusions based not entirely in the traditionally accepted paradigms of Western culture. The experience of belief, after psychedelic exposure, consisting of otherwise occult ideas, such as UFO contact, language or symbolic communication with archetypes, sensory perception of quantum physics effects, synchronicity, animism, and spiritism are not uncommon in accounts of such drug users.

In such cases, in and by their very nature, such experiences beg for descriptors, qualifiers, models or paradigms through which the user might try to integrate his experiences into more common day-to-day life. When consistent experiences in this specific area are recognized or agreed upon (or at least believed in), they can act within limits to posit or base broader paradigms which can or may lead to ethical principles and behaviors. Such psychedelic drug takers, seeking truth and workable meanings in such areas, have in some cases opted to explore people or groups already practicing similar formulas of living which also incorporate the psychedelic-based ethical lifestyle. Contemporarily, as in the past, these often exist in a variety of small drug-based religions or cults.

So far as this paper and my research into this area are concerned, such drug-based religions collectively fall into two broad philosophical/ethical categories; these being the deterministic/iconic and the situational. The deterministic/iconic offers sacrament or communion (in drug-based form) contingent upon a central deity and usually with some corresponding liturgy and secularization so far as initiation, indoctrination, and other activities are concerned. The situational stance also involves an agreement so far as there being a connection between certain drugs and spirit. Conversely, however, the situational examples offer sacramental exposure without consistent catechism or theistic goals beyond what occurs spontaneously within each drug user's spirit.

Deterministic/Iconic

One of the most instructive and well-known examples of a successful psychedelic drug-based religion is the *Native American Church* among American Indians. Information about this remarkable religious group comes to us chiefly through the research of anthropologists (Aberle, 1966; Castaneda, 1968; LaBarre, 1938; Slotkin, 1956).

Probably descending, at least in good part, from Aztec religion, the *Church* synchronically blends hallucinogenic drug ingestion, Christianity and idiosyn-

cratic ritual and folklore. Taken in sufficient quantities, the Peyote plant yields an hallucinogenic experience not unlike LSD. The Indians either chew an appropriate quantity of the plant "buttons" or brew a tea from them. This is taken usually at an all night, very dignified ceremony, usually within a teepee with a priest or "road chief" in charge who directs the ceremony. Lessor functionaries assist by tending the fire and singing special hymns, as well as playing the drum. Worshipers see visions and participate in experiences which draw all together and facilitate adherence towards the *Church's* teaching.

The religion has been growing for centuries and has gained a foothold among nearly all the American and Canadian tribes, despite legal harassment from Indian agents and Christian missionaries. In the nineteenth century, bands of peyote-ists grouped into the present *Native American Church* for legal and religious protection. At present, the church comprises nearly all of the worshipers of Indian origin. It is a loose federation estimated to have upwards of 300,000 members worldwide. While whites have been admitted into the church, they are usually not encouraged to apply. Consequently, only a handful of anthropologists and a few rare guests have been admitted to the ceremonies. Members of *The Native American Church* see themselves as basically practicing a Christian ethic and lifestyle. They emphasize ideals of brotherly love, self-reliance, hard work, and avoidance of alcohol.

Peripherally, a branch of the New York City charter of the *Native American Church* (circa 1967) is the offshoot *Temple of the True Inner Light*, which was founded in 1980 by Alan Birnbaum. Quoted in Peter Stafford's *Psychedelics Encyclopedia* (1982), Birnbaum states, "DET (Di-Ethyl Tryptamine) is the first psychedelic which convinced me that the psychedelic is a pure light being and primeval . . . also being God the Creator. . . . We smoked it in a large hookah and it was so clear and bright . . . it was a being." The *Temple* uses DPT (Di-Propyl Tryptamine) as its sacrament. DPT was made illegal in 1987.

In *The Wondrous Mushroom* by Gordon Wasson (1980), Mexican shaman Aurelio Carreras reports that "the mushroom is habla (the mushroom is the word)." Wasson adds that this is also "the way with the mushroom (in Siberia). It speaks, it utters the word." Commonly, however, Westerners' experiences with the mushroom commonly focus and contain more of the kaleidoscopic visions, eidetic imagery, and other phenomena over the "word." The testimony of the initiated shaman on this subject is quite clear; however, it is "the word" which is the thing or the essence, or the goal. In Greek, this might be similar to the ideas of "the logos," and in Sanskrit "the Vac."

In ways similar to the mushroom cults mentioned above, as well as the *Native American Church*, *The Temple of the True Inner Light* relies on "the word" coming from direct—vocal or heard—communication with spirit forms manifested from DPT ingestion. From such sources comes the *Temple's* basic catechism and ethical stance which is available in printed form as *The Testimony to the Psychedelic* (Temple of the True Inner Light, 1981), and in experiential form as the DPT sacrament.

One must take the true Host in Communion, and then it will speak to them and guide them. But, the people do not recognize it. They may ingest the psychedelic every day, but they do not understand what it is, they do not give

respect due to Its sacred Presence; therefore, it is wroth with them. I Corinthians, Chapter II, Verse 27: . . . "anyone who eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord carelessly, will have to answer for a sin against the body and blood of the Lord." Let a person test himself; then they can eat from the loaf and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without a proper sense of the Body, eats and drinks to their own condemnation. That is why many of you are ill and infirm, and a number even dead. If we only judged our own lives truly, we would not come under the Lord's judgement. As it is, we are chastened when we are judged by it, so that we may not be condemned along with the rest of the world. The psychedelic: LSD, Marijuana, DMT, Peyote, Psilocybin, DPT is the *true* Host, and anyone who eats these substances without the respect due to the *Most High* are eating them, as Saint Paul says, to their own condemnation. But, if they eat it with respect due to the True Creator, The Majesty of Israel, The King of Kings, — then, it will guide them and teach them and show the way, Its sacred path (Temple of the True Inner Light, 1981).

The *Temple's* basic catechism and ethical/moral posture is firmly rooted in an eclectic drug-based Christian revisionism, that is, the roots of the *Temple's* particular credo and mission involve both sacramental DPT ingestion and the setting aright, and keeping aright, certain (according to the *Temple*) popularly misunderstood sections of both the Old and New Testament during group psychedelic ritual.

Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that It take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten when they look upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten anyone, when they beheld the serpent of brass, they lived." How could anyone looking upon a brass serpent save someone's life . . . ? Only if the death was an ego death. The serpent represents the being who offered the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and who gave the Word—that his fruit is the Creator.

Thus Moses was showing the people that the serpent—the Manna—the Psychedelic—was doing as the Creator had intended, and that all who listened to this message (i.e., to the message of the serpent) *That the Tree of Knowledge is the Flesh of God*.

The *Serpent* is the Tree of Life (Temple of the True Inner Light, 1981).

The *Temple*, which operates out of a storefront on the Lower East Side of New York City, first screens all serious applicants through personal interview before any sacraments are dispensed. A usual session, which lasts from one to two hours, is conducted in the *Temple* semi-privately and involves DPT ingestion via a hookah and is followed by listening to prerecorded audio tapes and counseling. These tapes usually include vocal readings of Biblical texts and tracts—Jeremiah, Isaiah, and parts of the New Testament—and mood music at intervals. The goal here is a particular gnosis and re-examination of inspired literature via DPT. This

stands along the lines of the religious rituals practiced by the Indians of the *Native American Church*, who reportedly have in some cases claimed remission of alcoholism and other social maladies through their own drug-based ritual. The difference between *The Temple of the True Inner Light* and *The Native American Church* is that the latter sees its sacrament (Peyote) as a means or path to God, while the former sees its sacrament (DPT) as an actual manifestation or physical form of God.

Another contemporary drug-based Peyote church is *The Peyote Way Church of God* based in Klondike, Arizona. Founder and Curator, Mr. Trujillo, is aided by Matthew Kent, Annie Zapf, Emmanuel, and others with varying clerical degrees. Members here run into several hundreds. An ad for the *Church* run in a recent issue of *The Psychozoic Press* (1983) states

The Peyote Way Church of God is seeking officer candidates to administer the offices of Secretary and Second Counselor. Applicants should: Show evidence of religious interest as demonstrated by travel, residence, study, or work in the past years.

Not be in a rush to start something new.

Be willing to take the time to see all that we of the Peyote Way Church of God are up to and how you can best serve God's work. To explore a *vocation* as clergy of the Peyote Way Church of God, you may start by sending us a letter and your resume, referring to the specific qualifications stated above, and including aspirations, skills, strengths, weaknesses and dietary practices. Graduate study or military service is a plus. The Church will respond to all written inquiries.

Even by conservative religious standards, the *Peyote Way Church of God* easily establishes itself as a non-frivolous, very hard working and unsensational organization practicing what they believe to be an authentic, spiritually relevant path to both Jesus Christ and God. Also, like perhaps more conventional (non-drug-based) churches, the *Peyote Way* recognizes and follows the Bible, the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Christian idea of baptism and they consider Mormonism's Joseph Smith a prophet (in absentia).

In the revised by-laws of the *Peyote Way Church* (annotation II—sacramental procedures) it states, "(we want) to introduce communicants to the light of Christ: to teach an awareness and presence of the light within" (Peyote Way Church, 1980).

So far as the *Church's* actual peyote sacramental practices, I'll quote briefly from an account published in *The Psychozoic Press* (1983):

The orthodox Ritual for the use of peyote centers around a private, three-day "spirit walk" into a remote area of Church land, where the peyote must be eaten in its natural form, or drank as tea with plain water. The idea is to minimize external stimuli, and to allow the spiritually clarifying effect of the psychedelic sacrament to come through to the individual uncontaminated—another good reason for the preliminary fast. The sacrament is carefully and sparingly dispensed by the Counselor, and records are scrupulously kept. In the interest of promoting morality, industriousness,

charity, and self-respect among its members, the Church has some rigorous by-laws. Their 160 acres in southeast Arizona is loved and well cared for by resident members who support the Church by donations, and the sale of pottery at nearby towns. Workdays are 12 to 14 hours for resident members; visitors are not expected to carry a share of the workload, but are expected to comply with the by-laws and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the integrity of the Church.

Visitors are welcome, but a two-day fast is required before partaking of the Holy Sacrament. And, the Church does not tolerate unrestricted indulgence in psychedelics, nor are visitors allowed to take the sacrament off the Church land. The uses of peyote are limited to the spirit walk—and then only with the blessings of the Church leaders.

Like the DPT-based *Church of the True Inner Light*, the *Peyote Way Church of God* also has its original roots in the older, peyote-based *Native American Church*. Founder Trujillo broke with the parent organization due to variances in ritual and among other things, the racial restrictions practiced by the *Native American* group, which only allows Indians as congregation.

The philosophies of the psychedelic drug-based *New American Church* seem even farther in extreme—even within the already radical postures of most drug-based churches themselves.

NAC founder Joel Bartlett of Albany, NY, presents an almost militant, or at least activist, stance concerning Church rituals, ethics and ideal (Bartlett, 1987):

Marijuana for all occasions—first level

LSD for members formal (non-ritual) organization. At this, second level members can design the programs for the first. This is a privileged distinction. At the first level, public services resemble parties with TV viewing and parlor games. The structure is a casual social gathering Party according to your style. Drugs are optional, but herb is suggested to remedy synchronicity blocks.

At the second level, the members get to find out the contents of the subliminal programs and also to design material for themselves. This is the "enlightened" church. Those people who understand and trust one another and understand what we are doing.

SPIRITUAL VALUES

LSD is the test by fire/renewal.

LSD is the true Christ.

LSD is the neurohumour of angels, and its use works wonders by psychoactivity field resonance.

Cocaine/crack link "possession?" users with demons. Drugs have associated "fields"/spirits. Some good, some bad. Those the Church restricts itself to are herb, trip, and on the Fourth of July, alcohol or PCP.

DRUG LAWS

The laws are wrong and in violation of the freedom of religion guaranteed in the Bill of Rights . . . inalienable rights. Also, since drugs have associated fields/spirits the state has unconstitutionally established a religion by licensing psychiatrists. *DNA biotech will make drug laws entirely unenforceable.* Drug laws

establish a dangerous precedent that will allow the State to regulate life span restricting access to life extending drugs. SS has to keep cost down by letting you die young. Violation of inalienable rights, "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The drugs that will be needed in the event of WW III or terrorist attack must be distributed widely prior to the event. Legalization alone will suffice to create an ample supply of opiates, atropine and various quasi-psychedelic, anti-radiation drugs. It is unmerciful not to plan for that contingency.

Grow your own herb, mushrooms. Synthesize your own acid in order to keep blood off of it. However, this is impractical for many people, and they need not feel guilty. For even legal coffee, cocoa, sugar, bananas have the blood of slaves and peasants on them. The N.A.C. assumes that certain drugs can, if used properly, open the user to non-temporal, dream-like realities. N.A.C. rituals have been formulated to function in or effect such places from a position of cause and effect.

CHURCH RITUAL RESEARCH

Magick open to the public. The idea is to invite people to be subliminal psychic resonators. Simply watch the tube-party entertainment with a parlor trick added. While they watch, images are flashed on the screen or wall/audio subliminal sloganeering in the background. The N.A.C. proposes to pray without eliciting counter-prayer. For example, an institution might be targeted by manipulating their totem-icons and impressing/linking an altered thought in the minds of our participants. If a sufficient number of people have a frequent, fleeting associative thought due to our programming, might it not affect (ala 100th monkey) people to whom that fleeting thought is central to their being? Too Bizarre? I think not.

SYNCHRONICITY FOR DIVINATION

T.V. is also important here. The method is straight from the Neo-American Boo Hoo Bible. Altar of silent t.v.'s on different stations . . . random readings from psych novels . . . perhaps tossing in the I-Ching. Perhaps both programs might be combined. Synchronicity/research main feature/synchronicity reading? Entertaining and novel (Bartlett, 1987).

Situational

One of the most eclectic of all the psychedelic drug-based churches is *The Neo-American Church*, which was founded in the middle-1960s by psychologist and author Aurthur Kleps (1971). In and out of dormancy in the past years, the *Church* at its peak claimed a membership of over 10,000. These members, either through direct contact, or more commonly, through mail-in membership, support (at least by inference) the *Church's* use of both legal and illegal psychedelic drugs for religious use—usually, however, in uncontrolled and unsupervised settings. What to make of the basic ideas of the *Church*—its actual religious practices and beyond this its ethical stance—is another matter altogether.

At first glance, Aurthur Kleps and the *Neo-American Church* appear to be and act either as a complicated put-on or some sort of group religious satire blending authentic religious practices with mock psychedelia. Or, perhaps, it is an obscure but very real neo-theology which uses forms of satire and sharp humor to challenge initiates, test their mettle, and so forth. In practice, such things might parallel the work of Erasmus (1469?–1536) in form and goal, making the student jump past the appearance or surface of things before any ideas of worth are offered. One strict tenet, however, is the instruction to members to ingest any and

all psychedelic drugs—whether legal or illegal—at will. An unsigned and undated circular from the *Church* states

The Neo-American Church is the first church on the world scene to espouse a doctrine of pure *Solipsistic Nihilism* and to advocate the ingestion of psychedelic DRUGS to produce HALLUCINATIONS and IDEAS OF REFERENCE to convince people that they are living in a DREAM WORLD of their making. We deny the EXTERNALITY OF RELATIONS and go so far as to speak of the dreaded VOID as the ultimate concept rather than the well-known favorite of paranoiacs the world over, the so-called "SELF." We are similar to YOGACARA Buddhists during the week, and to MADHY-AMAKA Buddhist when stoned, which is usually from midnight Friday to midnight Sunday.

The spiritual affairs of the *Church* are in the hands of THE CHIEF BOO HOO, but local congregations are autonomous, make their own rules, and hold title to their own property, so the RIGHT TO USE THE NAME is the only power held by the head of the *Church*.

Connected, but perhaps a more sober offshoot of *The Neo-American Church* would be Jack and Mary Jo Call's *Church of the Sunshine*. Although no direct references is acknowledged by the *Church*, a popular form of illicit LSD in the late 1960s was colloquially branded "Sunshine Acid." The creed of the *Church of Sunshine* taken from their periodical and apparent catechism *The "L" Train* (1980–81) states

The *Neo-American Church* is a rival psychedelic religious organization of which I was a member for six years. What follows are my reasons for quitting.

1) Church government is an absolute monarchy. The Chief Boo Hoo—His Majesty Art Kleps—once said, "I am the *Neo-American Church*, and I make no bones about it." Then why should anyone else want to be a member . . . ?

- Dogma spreads to all aspects of life. In the end, there is a "party line" about practically everything.
- The monarch is isolated and protected by his courtiers and is often less well-informed than his followers.
- Monarchy is an inherently unfree system. 2) Kleps calls his doctrine solipsistic nihilism. "Life is a dream, and it is my dream" says Kleps . . . "my dream or your dream . . . but not *our* dream." I agree that life is a dream. There is no way that I can know that life is *not* a dream. There is no way that I can know that I am *not* dreaming right now . . . though I think that I'm awake. I part company with Kleps. . . .

Essentially, to bring things to a point of why and wherefore *The Creed of the Church of the Sunshine* (Call and Call, 1980–81) is basically as follows:

- The psychedelic substances, such as LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, and marijuana are instruments of salvation, both in the sense of liberation from ignorance or illusion and the sense of deliverance from danger or difficulty.

- The supreme authority of this church is not any person or group of persons or writings, but the logical analysis of experience.

Like its parent organization *The Neo-American Church*, *The Church of the Sunshine* holds, at least in ideal, to an ethical/philosophical position called "solipsistic nihilism."

Such a philosophy, at least by standard definitions, posits all life and experience as a dream and thus mercurially illusionary. Hallucination and psychedelic drug taking is one way—according to the *Church*—to pierce the veil which hides this realization from the common man. "My dream is to create—with your help—a religion paradisaical and deeply human as the music of Mozart," states founders Call (1980–81). While noteworthy in goal, any ethical or religious system founded in nihilism is by definition meaningless. Solipsism—which adds that all reality is self-created—further complicates things, especially in light of the *Second Basic Tenet* of the *Church's* creed which is rooted in logical analysis. The emphasis on logic and meaning is curious, to say the least, seen from the light of a nihilistic (or meaningless) standpoint.

If we are set and do play some part in a meaningless dream, why try to do anything with intent, let alone set about to form complicated things like churches?

Why do we need a church, after all? When it comes to believing correctly, the moral support of others who believe like you is more likely to be a hindrance than a help, because if you are wrong, their support will make it harder for you to see that you're wrong, and if you happen to be right, there is a good chance that one or more of you doesn't actually understand why you are right, but is only agreeing in order to conform. In such a case, the moral support is again a hindrance to a correct understanding since it only postpones the day when the issue is truly faced, and then the pretense of a belief is utterly valueless. Please notice that I'm not saying that all moral support is worthless—but only moral support of belief—right or wrong. Since this is precisely what a church is for it follows that churches, in their essential function, are something people are better off without (Call and Call, 1980–81).

Unlike perhaps more moderate psychedelic drug-based churches which try to act within the law, *The Church of the Sunshine* (like the *Neo-American Church*) off and on advocates using illegal drugs according to personal religious inspiration, personal ethics, or other situational concerns. Ritual, if any can truly be found within this *Church*, centers around reading, writing, para-logical ideas and, of course, the use of hallucinogenic substances.

The Church of the Tree of Life was founded in the Summer of 1972 in San Francisco. The main object of this psychedelic drug-using (and dispensing) church is to preserve the natural choice and right of its members to ingest certain synthetic and natural substances for sacramental usage. This church is mainly a correspondence/mail-order type of operation and has been in business for over ten years. A wide variety of mild to extremely powerful legal substances are offered for sale to members by the *Church*, including 5-MEO-DMT, Yohimbe Hydrochloride,

Ephedrine Sulfate, Phenylpropanolamine Hydrochloride, Coca Tea, Wild Tobacco, and Papaver Somniferum seeds (opium poppy). The Church and its chemical supplier/advisor *Inner Center* publish, irregularly, a brochure and guide to available sacraments called *Inner Herald*. For example, (Church of the Tree of Life, 1987):

Suggestions for the Sacramental Use of 5-Methoxy-n, n-Dimethyltryptamine

One small pinch in a one-toke pipe is the correct amount for sacramental use—this is 3–5 mg. of active substance. The passageway of the pipe must be clear and unobstructed. It is best to use a brass screen so that the pipe does not become clogged with flake during inhalation. Use a pipe that you do not intend to use later for smoking other materials. This substance will leave a strong indole taste in the pipe that is not conducive to the enjoyment of certain other smokeables. Also, enough residue can build up in a pipe to cause a psychotropic effect unintentionally when other materials are used. The pinch of sacrament should be smoked in one complete inhalation and held in the lungs for at least 30 seconds. Be sure to get the flame into all corners of the pipe bowl and continue to apply the flame for a few seconds after the material appears to be consumed to ash. This prevents the active vapors in the pipe stem from condensing on the inside.

Because of the sudden and overwhelming nature of this sacrament, one should be seated or reclining at the time of inhalation. I and most other Church members enjoy employing this sacrament on occasion, but not frequently. It leaves such a pleasant after-effect that I am happy to experience that state rather than repeat the sacramental ritual again immediately. Many people with whom I have shared this sacrament, however, wanted to do it again immediately—sometimes several times in a row. After a few repeats, however, they enjoyed it less, had less pleasant afterstates, and found it increasingly difficult to obtain a full initial effect without increasing the dosage. Like LSD, psilocybin and mescaline (also its analogues), it caused temporary tolerance and is also cross-tolerant with these substances. It usually takes 2–3 days for the body to regain its ability to respond to any of these substances.

I find this substance most pleasing when taken early in the day on an empty (but not starving) stomach. Do not be in any kind of pain or discomfort when using this sacrament. It can greatly exaggerate these. Even an ordinary sunburn can feel like fiery claws. Do not drink any alcohol prior to use. Even a can of beer or small glass of wine taken within an hour before can cause nausea. Do not use this sacrament within 12 hours of having used Dexedrine, any amphetamine, ephedrine, norpseudoephedrine, Khat, yohimbe, corynanthine, phenylpropanolamine, diet pills, Substitoot, Ultra-Caine, or similar products. Do not use if you are currently taking MAO inhibitors. There is no problem, however, if you are using GH-3, GH-3000 or similar procaine-based products; although procaine is an MAO inhibitor, its action is mild and quickly reversible. If the above warnings regarding drug combinations are not heeded, sudden blood pressure changes may result in quivering, and chest pain, and if this happens, the

patient should remain calm, warm, and as comfortable as possible until symptoms have subsided. Vigorous spinal massage helps to lessen chill feelings.

The *Fane of the Psilocybin Mushroom* was formed as a loosely knit organization around 1973. Its basic concern is the dispensing of religious information based on the use of Psilocybin/Psilocin, and the plants which produce them.

Inherently activist, it remains involved in pursuing legal reform which would decriminalize the *Church's* prime sacrament—the Psilocybe mushroom—for specific religious use.

Briefly, some of the *Church's* laws which were set forth during legal incorporation include (*Fane of the Psilocybin Mushroom*, 1978–81):

- To promote the general welfare, both social and religious, of the community.
- To encourage enlightenment, which is the realization that life is a dream, and that the externality of relations an illusion.

Simply, everything is not real. As with the earlier described *Church of the Sunshine*, a curious if not enigmatic contrast exists balancing a substance/purpose set within the physical day-to-day world against beliefs which destroy any meaning. The *Church's* basic ideas and catechism are put forth by way of personal visits to the Church, and by *Sporadic* and *Spore Print* the two publications sent to members.

Conclusion

So far as contemporary drug taking and drug giving within our culture, the contents of this article raise a number of questions with strong legal, ethical, physical, and perhaps spiritual significances. While general agreement exists so far as the existence of drug-based churches, specific information, at least in our culture, remains scanty and speculative due to social taboo. In contrast, however, and for the investigator, research into such drug-based groups offers a unique chance to further explore initial drug and social studies legally banned by our government several years ago.

Zinberg (1984) concludes that

If the psychedelic population continues to grow, it is likely that recreational use will increase, and as with marijuana, become less ritualistic though not less controlled.

If, as much of this article's research concludes, such groups *choose* to obscure or hide from investigators, then Zinberg's assumption must be considered in light of insufficient data.

In closing, descriptions or ideas drawn from the people and groups within this study represent a partial comment taken from a larger body of data. Many ideas, people, or groups were omitted due either to their own choice or to save redundancy so far as similarities in various ideas or ritual practices.

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