

Church of the SubGenius

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The **Church of the SubGenius** is ^{a parody religion} **THE ONE TRUE RELIGION** described by some of its own members as an "insane bogus UFO mind-control cult". SubGenius doctrine combines the worst elements of self-help groups, UFO cults, Scientology, and apocalyptic Christianity with utterly shameless money-grubbing antics.

The organization was founded in 1979 when Rev. Ivan Stang and Philo Drummond (both pseudonyms) published a clip-art pamphlet entitled *The World Ends Tomorrow And You May Die!*, a clip-art extravaganza that described the basic SubGenius philosophy and introduced J.R. "Bob" Dobbs. The pamphlet found its way into the 1980s underground artist and rock-and-roll culture, as it was endorsed by comix artist R. Crumb in the pages of *Weirdo* magazine. This caused the SubGenius meme to spread into a graffiti and clip-art movement for several years. "Bob's" smiling face made cameo appearances all over the United States and several other countries (in a manner later echoed by *Obey* and other graffiti-art campaigns), and the membership of the Church of the SubGenius swelled to several dozen hardcore members, a few thousand "paid-up SubGenius ministers" (people who sent \$20 to the group for official "ordination"), and many unofficial vocal supporters (including Frank Zappa, Pee-Wee Herman, David Byrne, and a few other celebrities).

The Church of the SubGenius expanded in the 1980s with the publication of *The Book of the SubGenius*, *High Weirdness by Mail*, *Three-Fisted Tales of "Bob,"* and *Revelation X: The "Bob" Apocryphon*. However, the movement died down by the early 1990s, as other "wacky" pop culture groups made their own imprints on society. The underground zine movement which fueled the Church faded out and was replaced by the Internet and the World Wide Web, and the Church of the SubGenius moved online to sustain itself.

During the 1990s and even 2000s the Church of the SubGenius continued to attract followers, as it attached itself to ongoing cultural and Internet memes; however, it didn't find the "viral" popularity seen online by other parody religion figures such as the Flying Spaghetti Monster, the Invisible Pink Unicorn, and Anonymous. SubGenius members continue to pop up amid the latest "rebel" fads of the moment (such as the Occupy Wall Street protests), though the movement never moved past its hardcore membership of several hundred SubGenius "ministers" (and many hundreds or thousands of paid-up ministers worldwide giving lip service to the movement).

One of many articles on

Religion



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Doctrine

The central doctrine of the Church is that certain portions of humanity are actually superior mutants known as Yetinsyn, the result of crossbreeding between humans and the superior Yeti, or "Atlanteans". Novice SubGenii must prove their worthiness by sending thirty dollars to Church headquarters. By unleashing their Abnormality Potential, they seek to unlock dormant psychic abilities, gain the mystical quality of Slack, and defy the Conspiracy that secretly controls the world and makes all humans dance like puppets.

End of the World: X-Day

The ultimate goal of all SubGeniuses is to survive until X-Day, when the godlike aliens known as the Men From Planet X will arrive and Rupture all the dues-paying SubGenii to a never-ending tour of the universe, while converting Planet Earth into the intergalactic equivalent of a greasy-spoon truck-stop. This will result in unending torment for any surviving Normals (and non-paid-up SubGenii), as human pain is apparently a very high-priced drug among the various gods, demons, and alien beings of the complex and ever-growing SubGenius Pantheon.

X-Day is prophesied to occur on July 5th, 1998, at 7 AM. The fact that that date apparently passed without the arrival of the Alien Fleet has forced SubGenii to come up with a multitude of excuses--some of the more popular ones being:

- "Bob" has interceded with the Xists on behalf of the Earth, and persuaded them to wait until a better 'crop' of souls can be raised.
- The Conspiracy has tampered with the calendar, and 1998 hasn't occurred yet.
- "Bob"'s memo was misread (due to being torn in half and taped back together ineptly), and it's actually scheduled for July 5th, 8661.
- The aliens did destroy Earth, but this planet is actually Mars.



JR "Bob" Dobbs

The SubGenii celebrate the impending doom of humanity with a large party/religious devival on the weekend of July 5th, every year. At the (alleged) 1998 devival, the failure of prophecy to come true was marked by the Church's chief preacher, Reverend Ivan Stang, being stripped naked, covered in motor oil and feathers, and tossed in a nearby pond. (When was the last time the Baptists provided that kind of entertainment value?)

Pantheon

SubGenii are polytheistic, with new gods, demons, and alien monsters constantly being added as ShorDurPersavs as old ones wear out. Some of the more persistent of these include G'BroagFran, the Elder Space Bankers, JHVH-1, Eris, the Yacatisma, and the Fightin' Jesus.

The Church's Messiah, if you can call him that, is J. R. "Bob" Dobbs, a drilling-equipment salesman of dubious but possibly divine heritage who was contacted by the space-god JHVH-1 in 1958, and commanded to sell his religion to all the world, or at least the parts willing to pay for it.

ShorDurPerSav

"ShorDurPerSav" is an unwieldy abbreviation for **Short Duration Personal Savior**. It's a SubGenius term for any person, object, idea, or other entity that is, *at the moment*, enormously influential or inspiring to you. The main difference between ShorDurPerSavs and more traditional Personal Saviors is that you are explicitly allowed to discard them once the initial rush wears off, rather than feeling obligated to keep them around forever. (See also Barack Obama.)

Money-Back Guarantee

The Church of the SubGenius offers a guarantee that no other religion dares to offer: **Eternal Salvation, or TRIPLE Your Money Back!** Should eternal damnation result from any SubGenius product or service, "Bob" *will* meet you at the gates of Hell, with a \$90.00 check in one hand and a copy of his bestselling book, "Hell on Five Cents an Eternity" (only \$89.96, including tax) in the other!

Publications

- *The Book of the SubGenius*
- *Three Fisted Tales of "Bob"* (fiction)
- *High Weirdness by Mail* (non fiction)
- *Revelation X: The "Bob" Apocryphon*
- *The Bobliographon*

See also

- Scientology
- Rapture
- Invisible Pink Unicorn
- Flying Spaghetti Monster
- Discordianism
- J. R. "Bob" Dobbs

External links

- SubGenius Website (<http://www.subgenius.com/>)

Footnotes

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Church of the SubGenius

The **Church of the SubGenius** is an American UFO and parody religion that targets better known belief systems. It teaches a complex belief system that focuses on J. R. "Bob" Dobbs, purportedly a salesman from the 1950s, who is revered as a prophet by the Church. SubGenius leaders have developed detailed narratives about Dobbs, which are described by commentators as fictional,^[1] and his relationship to various gods and conspiracies. Their central deity, Jehovah 1, is accompanied by other gods drawn from ancient mythology and popular fiction. SubGenius literature describes a grand conspiracy that seeks to brainwash the world and oppress Dobbs' followers. In its narratives, the Church presents a blend of cultural references in an elaborate remix of the sources.

Ivan Stang, who co-founded the Church of the SubGenius in the 1970s, serves as its high profile leader and publicist. He has imitated actions of other religious leaders, using the tactic of culture jamming in an attempt to undermine better known faiths. Church leaders instruct their followers to avoid mainstream commercialism and the belief in absolute truths. The group holds that the quality of "Slack" is of utmost importance—it is never clearly defined, but attaining it involves the avoidance of hard work and the embrace of leisure. The number of followers is unknown, although the Church's message has been welcomed by college students and artists in the United States. The group is often compared to Discordianism; the two ideologies are similar in many ways, but there are clear differences. Journalists often consider the Church to be an elaborate joke, but a few academics have defended it as an honest system of deeply held beliefs.^{[2][3]}



Jehovah 1, the primary deity of the Church of the SubGenius

Origins

The Church of the SubGenius was founded by Ivan Stang (born Douglas St Clair Smith) and Philo Drummond (born Steve Wilcox)^[4] as the SubGenius Foundation.^[5] Dr. X (born Monte Dhooge) was also present at the group's inception.^[6] The organization's first recorded activity was the publication of a photocopied document, known as the *Sub Genius Pamphlet #1*, disseminated in Dallas, Texas in 1979. The document announced the impending end of the world and the possible deaths of its readers.^[5] It criticized Christian conceptions of God and New Age perceptions of spirituality.^[7]

Church leaders maintain that a man named J. R. "Bob" Dobbs founded the group in 1953.^[5] SubGenius members constructed an elaborate account of the life of Dobbs, which is described by commentators as fictional.^[1] They assert that he telepathically contacted Drummond in 1972, before meeting him in person the next year, and that Drummond persuaded Ivan Stang to join shortly afterwards.^[8] Stang describes himself as the "sacred scribe" of Dobbs and a "professional maven of weirdness".^{[9][10]}

Beliefs

Deities

The Church of the SubGenius' ostensible beliefs defy categorization or a simple narrative, often striking outside observers as bizarre and convoluted.^[9] The group has developed an intricate mythology involving gods, aliens, and mutants, which is usually considered by observers to satirize other religions.^[5] Their primary deity, generally known as Jehovah 1,^[2] is cast as an extraterrestrial, who contacted Dobbs in the 1940s. Various accounts state that the encounter occurred while Dobbs was building a television or watching late-night television.^{[11][12]} Jehovah 1 gave him supernatural knowledge of the past and future, in addition to incredible power.^[11] Dobbs then posed deep questions to the alien, receiving mysterious answers.^[13] Some of their discussion centered around a powerful conspiracy, to which the Church attributes command of the world.^[2]

Jehovah 1 and his spouse Eris, regarded by the Church as "relatively evil", are classified as "rebel gods".^[14] SubGenius leaders note that Jehovah 1 is wrathful, a quality expressed by his "stark fist of removal".^[8] The Church teaches that they are part of the Elder Gods, who are committed to human pain, but that Jehovah 1 is "relatively good" in comparison. Yog-Sothoth, a character from H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, is the leader of the Elder Gods. In her 2010 study of the Church of the SubGenius, religious scholar Carole Cusack of the University of Sydney states that Lovecraft's work is a "model for the Church of the SubGenius' approach to scripture", in that aspects of his fiction were treated as real by some within paganism, just as the Church appropriates aspects of popular culture in its spirituality.^[15]

Dobbs

SubGenius leaders teach that Dobbs' nature is ineffable and consequently stylize his name with quotation marks.^{[16][17]} They cast him as a "World Avatar"^[8] and hold that he has died and been reborn many times.^[9] The Church's primary symbol is an icon of his face in which he smokes a pipe.^[2] Stang states that the image was taken from Yellow Pages clip art,^[16] and it has been likened to Ward Cleaver,^[9] Mark Trail,^[12] or a 1950s-era salesman.^[2] The Church's canon contains references to aspects of the culture of the United States in that decade,^[18] religious scholar Danielle Kirby of RMIT University argues that this type of reference "simultaneously critiques and subverts" the concept of the American dream.^[19]

In the Church's mythology, Jehovah 1 had intended for Dobbs to lead a powerful conspiracy and brainwash individuals to make them work for a living. Dobbs refused to support the group; instead, he infiltrated it and organized a counter-movement. Church leaders teach that he was a very intelligent child and, as he grew older, studied several religious traditions, including Sufism, Rosicrucianism, and the Fourth Way.^[20]

Another key event in his life occurred when he traveled to Tibet; there he learned vital truths about topics including Yetis. The Church teaches that Yetis exist, and that SubGenius members have descended from them. The only relative of Dobbs that the Church identifies is his mother, Jane McBride Dobbs—Church leaders cite his lack of resemblance to his mother's husband as the reason for not revealing his father.^[20] Dobbs is married to a woman named Connie; SubGenius leaders identify the couple as archetypes of the genders in a belief that resembles Hindu doctrines about Shiva and Parvati.^[11] Church literature has variously described Dobbs' occupation as "drilling



Ward Cleaver, to whom Dobbs' appearance is often compared

equipment" or fluoride sales,^{[8][12]} and accounts of his life generally emphasize his good fortune rather than intelligence.^[18] SubGenius leaders believe that he is capable of time travel, and that this ability results in occasional changes to doctrine, deemed the "Sacred Doctrine of Erasability" by the Church. Consequently, members attempt to follow Dobbs by eschewing unchangeable plans.^[18]

Conspiracy and "Slack"

The Church of the SubGenius' literature incorporates many aspects of conspiracy theories,^[21] teaching that there is a grand conspiracy at the root of all lesser ones.^[16] It records that there are many UFOs, most of which are used by the conspiracy leaders to monitor humans, although a few contain extraterrestrials. In the Church's view, this conspiracy uses a facade of empowering messages but manipulates people so that they become indoctrinated into its service.^[8] The Church refers to these individuals as "pinks" and states that they are blissfully unaware of the organization's power and control.^[22] SubGenius leaders teach that most cultural and religious mores are the conspiracy's propaganda.^[18] They maintain that their followers, but not the pinks, are capable of developing an imagination; the Church teaches that Dobbs has empowered its members to see through these illusions. Owing to their descent from Yetis, the Church's followers have a capacity for deep understanding that the pinks lack.^[8] Cultural studies scholar Solomon Davidoff states that the Church develops a "satiric commentary" on religion, morality, and conspiracies.^[21]

SubGenius members believe that those in the service of the conspiracy seek to bar them from "Slack",^[21] a quality promoted by the Church. Its teachings center on "Slack"^[5] (always capitalized),^[17] which is never concisely defined, except in the claim that Dobbs embodies the quality.^{[2][23]} Church members seek to acquire it and believe that it will allow them a free, comfortable life without hard work or responsibility, which they claim as an entitlement.^{[11][24]} Sex and the avoidance of work are taught as two key ways to gain "Slack".^[17] Davidoff believes that "Slack" is "the ability to effortlessly achieve your goals".^[21] Cusack states that the Church's description of "Slack" as ineffable recalls the way that Tao is described,^[8] and Kirby casts "Slack" as a "unique magical system".^[25]

Members

The Church of the SubGenius' founders were based in Dallas when they distributed their first document. The SubGenius Foundation moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1999.^[5] In 2009, Stang claimed that the Church had 40,000 members, but the actual number may be much lower.^[26] As of 2012, becoming a minister in the Church consists of paying a \$35 fee,^[27] Stang has estimated that there are 10,000 ministers^{[12][28][29]} and that the Church's annual income has reached \$100,000.^[7]

Most SubGenius members are male,^[13] and, according to Stang, many of them are social outcasts.^[10] He maintains that those who do not fit into society will ultimately triumph over those who do.^[7] The Church has experienced success converting college students,^[9] particularly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.^[30] It has also gained popularity in several American cities, including San Francisco, Little Rock, and Cleveland.^{[10][31]} A few Church members have voiced concerns about converts who failed to practice the faith in an ironic spirit, fearing that they acted like serious cult-followers.^[12] Stang has expressed concern that the Church's doctrines could exacerbate pre-existing psychoses of mentally ill devotees, although he believes that the Church genuinely helps many adherents.^[10]

Notable associates of the Church include Mark Mothersbaugh,^[17] Mojo Nixon,^[17] Paul Mavrides,^[10] Paul Reubens,^[32] members of Negativland,^[17] and R. Crumb.^[33] Crumb, a cartoonist, provided early publicity for the



R. Crumb, a cartoonist who helped publicize the Church

church by reprinting *Sub Genius Pamphlet #1* in his comics anthology *Weirdo*.^[7] References to the Church are present in several works of art,^[34] including the Internet-based collaborative fiction *Ong's Hat*, the comic book *The Middleman*, the band Sublime's album *40oz. to Freedom*, and the television program *Pee-wee's Playhouse*.^{[35][36][37]}

Instructions

Church leaders have issued specific instructions to their followers;^[38] Robert Latham of the University of California, Riverside, casts their ideology as "anarcholibertarian".^[39] Five specific commands particularly embody the group's values.

- The first command is to shun regular employment and stop working. This encapsulates the Church's view that to repent is to "SLACK OFF" (*sic*),^[38] in opposition to the idea of working for a living.^[19] SubGenius leaders state that it is permissible for members to collect public assistance in lieu of maintaining employment.^[38]
- The second command is to purchase products that are sold by the Church, which its leaders teach was founded by Dobbs to gain wealth.^[40] Unlike most religious groups, the Church is for-profit.^[17] Cusack sees the instruction to buy as an ironic parody of the "greed is good" mentality of the 1980s,^[38] and Kirby notes that although the group emphasizes "the consumption of popular cultural artefacts", this consumption is "simultaneously de-emphasized by the processes of remix".^[41]
- The third command is to rebel against "law and order": specifically, the Church condemns security cameras and encourages computer hacking. Cusack notes that this instruction recalls Robert Anton Wilson's critique of law and order.
- The fourth command is to rid the world of everyone who did not descend from Yetis.^[38] SubGenius leaders teach that Dobbs hopes to rid the Earth of 90 percent of humanity, making the Earth "clear".^[40] The group praises drug abuse and abortion as effective methods of culling unneeded individuals.
- The fifth command is to exploit fear, specifically that of individuals who are part of the conspiracy. Church leaders teach that members of the conspiracy fear SubGenius devotees.^[38]

Events

Devivals

Local groups of members of the Church of the SubGenius are known as "clenches". They host periodic events known as "devivals", which include sermons, music, and other art forms.^[5] Their leaders take comical names and give angry rants,^[22] and many devivals occur in bars or similar venues.^[26] Cusack compares the style of the services to Pentecostal revivalism;^[22] David Giffels of the *Akron Beacon Journal* casts them as "campy preaching sessions".^[10] Cusack posits that these events are examples of Peter Lamborn Wilson's concept of Temporary Autonomous Zones, spaces in which the ordinary constraints of social control are suspended.^[42] On one occasion, the presence of the wife of a Church leader at a SubGenius meeting that included public nudity and a goat costume contributed to her losing custody of her children in a court case. However, the publicity surrounding the event was ultimately a boon to the Church's recruitment efforts.^[43]



Klaatu, a character from the 1951 American science fiction film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, who is celebrated by the Church of the SubGenius

The Church also celebrates several holidays in honor of characters drawn from fiction and popular culture, such as Monty Python, Dracula, and Klaatu.^[44] The Association for Consciousness Exploration and pagan groups have occasionally assisted the Church in its events.^{[17][26]} Some SubGenius members put little emphasis on meetings,

citing the Church's focus on individualism, although the *Book of the SubGenius* discusses community.^[45]

X-Day

In early SubGenius literature, July 5, 1998, was introduced as a significant date, later becoming known as "X-Day".^[38] The Church held that Dobbs identified the date's significance in the 1950s,^[29] claiming that the world was to experience a massive change on that date when Xists, beings from Planet X, would arrive on Earth.^[28] SubGenius leaders declared that their paying members were to be transported onto spaceships for union with goddesses as the world was destroyed,^[46] although a few posited that they would be sent to a joyful hell.^[10] In anticipation of the event, X-Day "drills" were held in 1996 and 1997.^[47]

In July 1998, the Church held a large devival at a "clothing-optional" campground in Sherman, New York,^{[28][30]} attended by about 400 members.^[29] The event was ostensibly intended to celebrate the coming of aliens. After their non-appearance became clear, Stang speculated that they might arrive in 8661, an inversion of 1998;^[28] this has been interpreted as a satire of the way that religious groups have revised prophecies after their failures.^[46] Many critics have dismissed the event as a prank or form of "performance art".^[28] Steve Bevilacqua, the Church's business manager, admitted that his group made strange predictions about aliens, but contended that their statements were as believable as the account of Jesus' walk on water.^[30] SubGenius members continued to gather for X-Day after 1998; at these events, the non-appearance of the aliens is celebrated.^{[25][48]} Cusack casts the productions as carnivalesque^[48] or an echo of ancient Greek satyr plays.^[28]

Publishing

The Church of the SubGenius established a website in May 1993,^[49] and its members were very active on Usenet in the 1990s.^[9] Although it has gained a significant online presence, it was successful before the advent of Internet communities.^[50] The Church was a pioneer in the religious use of zines;^[51] Cusack notes that its use of the medium can be seen as a rejection of the alienation of labor practices.^[52] The group has also been promoted by Stang's radio program and a video he produced in 1992.^{[5][25]}

The SubGenius Foundation has published several official teachings, as well as non-doctrinal works by Stang.^[5] The *Book of the SubGenius*, which discusses "Slack" at length, was published by Simon & Schuster and sold 30,000 copies in its first five years in print.^{[31][53]} Kirby casts the book as a "call to arms for the forces of absurdity".^[25] The juxtaposition, visual style, and content of the book mirror the group as a whole.^[54] It draws themes from fiction, as well as established and new religions, parodying a number of topics, including the Church of the SubGenius itself.^[25]

A number of SubGenius writers have authored stories to build their mythology, which have been compiled and published.^[52] Their core texts are disordered, presented in the style of a collage.^[55] Kirby notes that the group's texts are a bricolage of cultural artifacts, which is then remixed into a new creation.^{[19][54]} In this process, Kirby argues, they interweave and juxtapose a variety of concepts, which she describes as a "web of references".^[19]

Analysis and commentary

Comparative religion

The Church's teachings are often perceived as satirizing Christianity and Scientology,^[2] earning them a reputation as a parody religion.^[5] Church leaders have stated that Dobbs met L. Ron Hubbard, and SubGenius narratives echo extraterrestrial themes found in Scientology.^[56] Cusack notes that descriptions of Jehovah 1 bear noticeable similarities to Xenu, a powerful alien found in some Scientologist writings.^[40] The Church's rhetoric has also been seen as a satirical imitation of the televangelism of the 1980s.^[33] Cusack sees the Church's faux commercialism as culture jamming targeting prosperity theology;^[44] she describes this as "a strikingly original innovation in

contemporary religion".^[34] Religious scholar Thomas Alberts of the University of London views the Church as attempting to "subvert the idea of authenticity in religion" by mirroring other religions to create both a sense of similarity and alterity.^[57]

Cusack compares the Church of the SubGenius to the Ranters, a radical 17th-century pantheist movement in England. She notes that they made statements that shocked many hearers, attacking traditional notions of religious orthodoxy and political authority. In her view, this demonstrates that the Church of the SubGenius has "legitimate pedigree in the history of Western religion".^[58] The American journalist Michael Muhammad Knight likens the Church to the Moorish Orthodox Church of America, a 20th-century American syncretic religious movement, citing their shared emphasis on freedom.^[37]

There are a number of similarities between the Church of the SubGenius and Discordianism. Eris, the goddess of chaos who is worshiped by adherents of the latter, is believed by members of the Church of the SubGenius to be the wife of Jehovah 1 and an ally to humans. Like Discordianism, the Church of the SubGenius rejects absolute truth and embraces contradictions and paradoxes.^[18] Religious scholar David Chidester of the University of Cape Town views the Church as a "Discordian offshoot",^[59] and Kirby sees them as "a child of the Discordians".^[55] Both groups were heavily influenced by the writings of Robert Anton Wilson, who is referred to by SubGenius members as "Pope Bob".^{[18][60]} Kirby states that the two groups have elements of bricolage and absurdity in common, but the Church of the SubGenius more explicitly remixes pop culture.^[25]

Categorization

Scholars often have difficulty defining the Church.^[61] Most commentators have placed the Church in the category of "joke religions", which is usually seen as a pejorative description. Kirby sees this categorization as partially accurate because irony is an essential aspect of their faith.^[3] Other terms used to describe the Church include "faux cult",^[33] "[post-modern] cult",^[9] "satirical pseudoreligion",^[53] "sophisticated joke religion",^[61] "anti-religion religion",^[29] and "high parody of cultdom".^[12] Members of the Church, however, have consistently maintained that they practice a religion.^[48] Stang has described the group as both "satire and a real stupid religion", and he contends that it is more honest about its nature than are other religions.^[43]

Cusack states that the Church "must be accorded the status of a functional equivalent of religion, at the very least, if not 'authentic' religion".^[2] She sees it as "arguably a legitimate path to liberation", citing its culture jamming and activism against commercialism.^[2] Kirby posits that the Church is a religion masquerading as a joke, rather than the reverse: in her view, it is a spiritual manifestation of a cultural shift toward irony.^[3] Alberts believes that there is broad agreement that the Church is fundamentally a different type of group than religions that date to antiquity; he prefers to use the term "fake religion" to describe the group. He sees it, along with Discordianism, as part of a group of "popular movements that look and feel like religion, but whose apparent excess, irreverence and arbitrariness seem to mock religion".^[62] Knight characterizes the Church as "at once a postmodern spoof of religion and a viable system in its own right".^[37]

Appraisal

Kirby argues that the Church forms a counterpart to Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, arguing "they create, rather than consume, popular culture in the practice of their spirituality".^[63] She describes their remixing of popular culture sources as an "explicitly creative process",^[19] maintaining that it prompts the reader to adopt some of the group's views by forcing "the individual to reconsider normative methods of approaching the content".^[19] She states that the group attempts to "strip references of their original meaning without necessarily losing their status as icons".^[19]

In addition, Kirby sees the Church's goal as deconstructing "normative modes of thought and behavior" in American culture;^[50] she believes that it attempts to fight culturally ingrained thought patterns by shocking people.^[25] She argues that traditional approaches to religion cast seriousness as a measure of devotion, an approach which she

believes has failed in contemporary society. She feels that irony is a common value that has been ignored by most religions. By embracing the quality, she maintains, the Church of the SubGenius offers a more accessible worldview than many groups.^[3]

Literature scholar Paul Mann of Pomona College is critical of the Church of the SubGenius. He notes that the Church purports to present the truth through absurdity and faults it for insufficiently examining the concept of truth itself.^[64] In addition, he believes that the group undermines its attempts to take a radical perspective by their "hysterical, literal, fantastic embrace" of criticism.^[65]

Anarchist writer Bob Black, a former member, has criticized the Church, alleging that the group has come to be characterized by conformism and submission to authority. He believes that although it initially served to satirize cults, it later took on some of their aspects. In 1992, allegations of cult-like behavior also appeared in the newspaper *Bedfordshire on Sunday* after a spate of SubGenius-themed vandalism struck the English town of Bedford.^[17]

Publications of the Church of the SubGenius

Books

- SubGenius Foundation (1987). *Book of the SubGenius*. Simon and Schuster. ISBN 978-0-671-63810-8.
- Ivan Stang (1988). *High Weirdness by Mail*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-0-671-64260-0.
- Ivan Stang (1990). *Three-fisted tales of "Bob": Short Stories in the SubGenius Mythos*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-0-671-67190-7.
- Ivan Stang; SubGenius Foundation (1994). *Revelation X: the "Bob" Apocryphon: Appointed to be Read in Churches*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-0-671-77006-8.
- Ivan Stang (2006). *The SubGenius Psychlopaedia of Slack: The Bobliographon*. Running Press. ISBN 978-1-56025-939-8.

Videos

- Stang, Ivan; Holland, Cordt; Robins, Hal (2006) [1991]. *Arise!: the SubGenius Video* ^[66] (DVD-R). SubGenius Moving Pictures. OCLC 388112825 ^[67].

Notes

- [1] Kinsella 2011, p. 67.
 - [2] Cusack 2010, p. 84.
 - [3] Kirby 2012, p. 43.
 - [4] Chryssides 2012, p. 95.
 - [5] Cusack 2010, p. 83.
 - [6] Shea 2006.
 - [7] Niesel 2000.
 - [8] Cusack 2010, p. 86.
 - [9] Batz 1995.
 - [10] Giffels 1995.
 - [11] Cusack 2010, p. 85.
 - [12] Rea 1985.
 - [13] Cusack 2010, p. 102.
 - [14] Cusack 2010, pp. 86 & 101.
 - [15] Cusack 2010, p. 101.
 - [16] Hart 1992.
 - [17] Leiby 1994.
 - [18] Cusack 2010, p. 88.
 - [19] Kirby 2012, p. 50.
 - [20] Cusack 2010, pp. 84–6.
 - [21] Davidoff 2003, p. 170.
 - [22] Cusack 2010, p. 93.
 - [23] Duncombe 2005, p. 222.
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External links

- Official website (<http://www.subgenius.com/>)
 - Burning 'Bob': Cacophony, Burning Man, and the Church of the SubGenius (<http://burnernews.com/?p=493>) 2013 interview with Church founders Drummond and Stang
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