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Review of *One Nation Under God: The Triumph of the Native American Church* Compiled and edited by Huston Smith and Reuben Snake

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One Nation Under God: The Triumph of the Native American Church. Compiled and edited by Huston Smith and Reuben Snake. Foreword by Senator Daniel K. Inouye. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1996. Photographs, appendix. 176 pp. \$24.95.

In 1990 the United States Supreme Court made “what some consider the most infamous ruling in its history” in the case of *Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith*. Alfred Leo Smith,

a Klamath member of the Native American Church, had been fired from his job for ingesting peyote—the sacramental substance at the core of his religious faith, but a controlled substance in the eyes of drug prevention officials. The Supreme Court upheld the State's right to interfere with peyotists' freedom of religion even without proving a "compelling state interest" to do so. Justice Antonin Scalia's majority opinion called individual religious liberty a "luxury" the US could no longer "afford," and if "minority" faiths were to suffer from his ruling, so be it.

The country's major religious denominations, as well as members of the Native American Church, immediately formed a coalition seeking to overturn the ruling, and in 1993 Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which requires proof of a compelling state interest for government to infringe upon individual religious rights. Reuben Snake, a Winnebago peyotist leader, wished to protect his fellow religionists even further. He organized a second coalition to strengthen the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act; and though he died in 1993, his efforts led to the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994, which specifically protect Indians from being "penalized or discriminated against" for their religious practice, in the Native American Church.

One Nation Under God reviews the history and ceremonial structure of American Indian peyotism in order to demonstrate its spiritual efficacy. Peyotists attest to its healing powers, its ability to focus the mind upon the divine, its symbolic import, and its potency in revitalizing Indian culture, upholding Indian morals, and holding Indian communities together. A scientist shows that peyote is neither addictive nor harmful in its ritual context. Other scholars examine the legal complexities surrounding the *Smith* case. Finally, there are vignettes from the life and death of Reuben Snake.

For someone with no knowledge of the peyote religion, this work of advocacy makes a

handy, if one-sided, guide. Scholars will find little new here, however, much they may admire the editors' intent.

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