

High Society: In God We Trust

On May 23, cannabis activists Anne Armstrong and Alan Gordon will host a special celebration at Roger Williams National Memorial in PVD. What is significant about this event, however, is that it will involve an ancient religious ceremony — the “Celebration of Holy Fire — which includes the use of cannabis in various forms. The event will start at about 8pm and last for 45 minutes, though I suspect that the spectacle will last a bit longer with the amount of media attention Anne and Alan have been recently receiving.

In an attempt to find out more about this celebration, I set out on one of my usual nightly journeys and curiously enough, was able to corner both Anne and Alan to ask them a few questions about their upcoming event.

Dave Sorgman: You both are conducting this ceremony as representatives of The Healing Church. Can you tell me a little about this church and what you do?

Alan Gordon: The Healing Church is a Cannabist church of Judeo-Christian origin. Other Cannabist sects include Rastafarians (also Judeo-Christian) and Hindu Shivites.

Anne Armstrong: The Healing Church practices the religion of compassion. True religion (from the root *ligare*, which means ‘to bind up,’ as one would splint a broken limb or graft a branch onto a tree) is meant to reconnect us to our Divine Origin. Our minds and bodies are created with ‘ligand receptors’ throughout, and it is these physical sites where the Hebrew Biblical entheogen KNH-BSM (plural, in Hebrew of KNH-BS, literally ‘cane aromatic’) connects our hearts, minds and bodies to that sacred realization of YHVH.

Our mission is to spread the message of compassion, to teach the lesson of the loaves and the fishes, which is that when we share, everyone has more than enough, and to be an instrument in the hands of the Blessed Mother to bring about the Healing of the Nations.

DS: I understand that this ceremony has biblical roots. Can you explain what those roots are and how/where they are referenced in the Bible?

AG: Oh, the Bible is *full* of explicit references to cannabis, and implied references based upon the former. Anne’s forest-through-the-trees approach is the best way to grasp it, before cherry-picking the Bible for individual “trees,” however. I can’t stand when people cherry-pick scripture to make an argument. That’s a tactic of racists and bigots, and we favor a broader *over-standing* of the Bible.

AA: The very first reference to the Tree of Life, ‘*Eitz Chayyim*’ in Scripture is right after Adam’s sin – “*and the LORD said, “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever.”* So the humans were shut away from the Tree by an angel with a flaming sword that could sever the limbs of any who dared approach.

Immediately following, we see the first murder – the farmer Cain (one of the first linguistic references to something that also birthed the words Cana, Canaan, and Canon, the length of the measuring staff of the New Temple) misuses his crop and the LORD is displeased.

In the next chapter, we read about a miraculous Anointing Oil, made with nearly six pounds of the flowering tops of aromatic cane - KNH BSM in Hebrew. This oil was used to create the 'Messiah', or Anointed One, whose role it was to heal the people with various preparations of KNH BSM and to burn offerings to make the '*Aroma Soothing to the LORD*' on the Altar. The descriptions in the Torah resemble a medical textbook and they describe conditions that are known to be healed dramatically by cannabis oil.

Throughout Scripture, we see repeating patterns of apostasy, usually culminating in a chastisement, and then the restoration of the offering of Holy Smoke to YHWH. Interestingly, many of these chastisements came to pass during a time of pestilence and rot of carbohydrate-high food sources and they would abate when KNH BSM was available in sufficient quantities that hempseed could be staple food for humans and their livestock.

Jesus the Messiah was the embodiment of the Anointing. We know that the three Magi brought the other ingredients of the Anointing Oil and that the baby was anointed at His birth. We know that all his healings followed the Old Testament pattern of KNH BSM restorations and we know that he made it clear that the healing and enlightenment that his life and resurrection brought into the world are for all the people, not just a chosen few.

The Book of Revelation tells us that at the end of this Age, there will flow a river, clear as crystal, with trees on each side that bear fruit every month, and her leaves will be "for the Healing of the Nation."

The Tree of Life is being restored to us, if we can show good faith.

AG: Now that Anne's given us the overview, we can look more closely at the real specifics. The Bible is chock full of subtle references to "Kaneh-Bos" (Hebrew, lit. "Cane Aromatic", plural Kaneh-Bosim), but the most important instance is in the recipe for the ancient Hebrews' Holy Anointing Oil at Exodus 30:23, which was the center of all their religious rites — it was used in virtually every ritual.

Although Exodus prohibits Kaneh-Bos for most people, the Bible contains many examples of people using the oil unlawfully, but being found innocent due to their good faith. For example, in the Book of Numbers 11:26-29, two men named Eldad and Medad illegally anoint themselves, but are praised by Moses for breaking his laws, regardless.

This Biblical medicinal plant is depicted in scripture just like modern cannabis, anatomically, and was heavily restricted with many disputes over the restrictions — just like modern cannabis. It made an "aroma soothing to the Lord" when burned, and ironically, the tribe's healthiest grazing animals, when their fatty tissues were thrown on the altar fire, made the same aroma (indicating that the reason the animals were so healthy is because they had grazed heavily upon Kaneh-Bos, the only ingredient in the soothing-smelling anointing oil that grazing animals will eat in the modern world).

DS: In reference to the actual ceremony, how exactly is the ritual performed and will any virgins be sacrificed or otherwise objectified?

AA: We will start by blessing the Well of the Prophecy. From this Well will flow the Waters of Life to the four corners of the world. In this sacred spot, where the door of sanctuary was established to be a signpost until the end of the age, we will anoint and bless the Well, and then move to the grassy area where we will offer prayers and songs of thanksgiving, hear a teaching about the restoration of KNH BSM to all who can keep the faith, anoint and incense the faithful, and share a sip of Bhang - Kefir.

AG: Virgins? Ha! Good one! We will not be sacrificing or degrading any virgins, animals or people. Our ceremony consists of prayers, a topical application of the Holy Anointing Oil, followed by a sip of *bhong kefir* (a fermented milk drink, with cannabis and honey added, similar to the *bhong lassi* drink imbibed in India on for Holi day celebrations), followed by sharing of burning Kaneh-Bos vapors.

DS: The Roger Williams Memorial is a national park, falling under federal jurisdiction, which maintains a stance of prohibition against cannabis. Seeing that cannabis will be used during the ceremony, are you at all concerned that there will be some sort of legal repercussion for the activities scheduled to take place?

AA: The First Amendment protects all religious practice unless there is a compelling public interest, and it prohibits the State from preferring one religion over another. Our Roman Catholic brethren serve alcohol to children as young as 7 in the Chapel located on the grounds of Grand Canyon National Park, and there has never been any interference from the Parks Service or the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, and Tobacco. Even during Prohibition of alcohol, it was clear that no law could trump one's religious right to commune sacramentally.

AG: We are secure in our belief that the US government will protect our freedom and not interrupt it. As per the ABC6 news coverage of the event, the National Park Service understands its duty to weigh fundamental supra-legal religious rights against mere statutes. They are aware of the case laws of *Hobby Lobby*, which broadened religious protections even for people who subvert others' rights in the name of religion, as well as a Supreme Court case called *Att-Gen v UDV*, in which the justices unanimously ruled in favor of a church that used DMT, a powerful hallucinogen.

From a political perspective, if the Feds tried to interrupt a harmless religious action at the birthplace of religious freedom, they could no longer hold any pretense of Constitutional enforcement. Roger Williams not only founded US religious freedom, but global freedom — it is the US Constitutional protection that has inspired virtually all modern nations to adopt religious freedom. In a sense, that park is the global birthplace of that freedom, and not just for the US.

DS: What kind of obstacles (if any) did you run into trying to obtain a permit to hold this event?

AG: Great question! The National Park Service relied upon the US Attorney's advice throughout; they had a razor-thin line to walk, and so they asked a lot of questions about safety, church membership and how we would get home safely.

In the end, they realized that we cannot be given a special right not available to others based solely on our religion, because that would violate the Establishment Clause by lending government support to just one faith. On the other hand, they cannot deny us our right to practice. The Park Service's ultimate solution was one in which a prayer service permit was issued with a proviso that we not break cannabis laws. We sought clarity about the Supreme Court's unanimous sense that religious use was not breaking a law, and the Park Service provided that clarity by saying their words addressed our clearly-worded concern. They simply can neither give explicit express permission nor denial. Constitutionally protected activity requires no permit, since the right is inherent. We told them we would gather to share cannabis, and they gave us a permit for a large crowd, and they told the TV news they had to protect our Constitutional rights.

The driving safety issue was resolved in a funny way. I started to write up some long promise about how we would ensure safe driving, but Anne said, "We don't have to answer to that." As it turns out, the

Park Service allows the Catholic Church to serve religious wine to underage drivers, with no supervision by government or even the church, except for an honor system before God that people seem unwilling to break.

Ultimately, the biggest obstacle was fear of punishment for assertively asking for what we need — protection of a fundamental right. Cannabis users have been so programmed that their nutrient is a vice, we sometimes have a hard time standing up for ourselves. That time is over, now, though — a new day has dawned.

DS: There are many skeptics out there who are going to assume that this is an attempt to abuse religious freedoms in order to justify blatant drug use. Is there any truth in their assumptions and how do you answer to such skepticism?

AA: That is as offensive a question as asking a Catholic if they are going to Mass in order to get drunk. KNH BSM has a longer and deeper tradition of religious use in many of the world's religions than alcohol, and if a skeptic asked such a question, I would pray that their ignorant bigotry would pass once they read a book or two.

AG: I started using cannabis in 1983, and have never really heeded the ban in the first place, so the idea that I converted in bad faith, just to get cannabis, is absurd from that perspective. Further, I have turned myself in with cannabis 11 times, in PA, NC, GA and federally, without even invoking religion, relying on other legal defenses entirely.

Anne has been a devout Jew, then Catholic, for decades, and is so fervent a believer there is no way anyone who knows her could think she was faking. The pro-life movement is not one traditionally associated with Cannabist faith, due to freedom of choice issue overlap, but Anne and I personally oppose the choice to abort, and Anne was even arrested for praying outside a clinic long ago. Her faith is unstoppable and sincere, as is mine.

When Italy's Supreme Court allowed Rastafarians to possess cannabis, there was fear of mass conversion, just to use cannabis. It never happened. We all imagine some white kid with a couple Bob Marley albums and a red-green-and-gold tam trying to pretend he is Rasta for legal privilege, but in practice, even where allowed, it just does not happen.

DS: What's next for The Healing Church as you prepare for May 23, and what are your expectations for this event?

AG: We are excited to announce a partnership with the New England Cannabis Antidiscrimination Taskforce (NECAT) to assist those suffering discrimination, whether in the workplace, real estate rentals, or government agencies.

AA: I pray that our event will help spread awareness of our inalienable rights and help those suffering in prison for their faith to find the voice to petition for their freedom. I have been ordained clergy since Earth Day, 2002, and I intend to establish a ministry to those incarcerated, just as the Catholics are allowed to receive their communion while in prison.

DS: Thank you both for your time and efforts that you have made to spread knowledge and awareness about cannabis and the cannabis culture, here in New England. I wish you the best on your endeavors and hope for a great turn out at the event. I look forward to seeing a successful celebration that will

hopefully pave the way for future atavists, looking to enlighten the masses.

Creed of The Healing Church

Cannabis is the Tree of Life, KNH BSM, and her story runs through scripture, from Genesis, where access to the Tree was denied, through Revelation, where the Woman clothed with the sun triumphs over the dragon and the plant with leaves for the healing of the nations. In the fullness of time, Eitz Chayiim is restored to us, but her flowering tops are sacred to the LORD and must never be an item for trade. They are to be shared the way a mother shares food among her children. KNH stalks and seeds may be traded for the clothing and nourishment and industry of the world as long as no one is excluded from opportunities. These are for the healing of the environment and for the restoration of social justice. But the flowers are consecrated unto the LORD, never rendered into Caesar and never to be used as a means for one human to subjugate or dominate another. This is anathema. Alan Gordon, The Healing Church's Canon has spent the past two decades researching and writing about KNH BSM, the chastisements at the threshing floor, the riddles of the 70 and 72, and the coming Anointing. We speak flaw the two outside the camp who Anointed themselves. May the Anointing remain on us, Selah.