## Spiritual and Sacramental

## Use of Psychedelics

The use of psychedelics as sacraments in religious ceremonies has been well established by scholars such as Slotkin, Schultes, Wasson, and many others. The Native American Church, for one example, had their beliefs well established long before there were any laws about peyote, and the roots of this church can be traced at least as far back as the time of the Aztecs, and possibly back to the first century b.c.* Similar antiquity holds for the seeds of the morning glory, known among the Zapotecs as badah negro, and the related varities of Rivea corymbosa. Peruvian use of the hallucinogenic cactus San Pedro has been dated by some authorities back to the tenth century b.c.

Numerous authors have also noted that religious and philosophical thought are often founded from experiences with extraordinary states of consciousness, while others have pointed out the relationship of mind-altering drugs to religious experience in a number of individuals.** What is the common denominator which relates religious experience and the psychedelic experience? One of the

**See The Varities of Religious Experience by William James, 1929, and W.H. Clark's Chemical Ecstacy, Shreed and Ward, New York, 1969.

*The Peyote Religion: A Study in Indian-White Relations. J.S. Slotkin, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956.

answers is transcendence.

Transcendence, in fact, also links eastern and western religious teachings: Nearly all religious teachings have some form of transcendence incorporated into their doctrines. The Judeo-Christian teaching of being born again is the Hindu equivalent of seeing beyond the net of illusion. Resurrection corresponds to reincarnation; both are referring to the transcending of the physical body in an eternal life. Hallucinogenic drugs have been used as a means of allowing the individual to transcend his sensory perceptions and ordinary mental processes. Whether this is a higher or lower place is a subjective value judgement of the drug's effect as interpreted by the individual. Millions have found it to be that higher place, but even more millions have not found it so, nor do they want to find it, at least not through the vehicle of hallucinogenic drugs.

Cohen has suggested that if we assume that religious experience does have an anatomical locus (within the nervous system) and is based on a particular pattern of electroneural stimulation within the brain, it would still not diminish the intrapersonal impact of it.* The subjective interpretation and awesome significance of the experience will remain regardless of whether it is understood in physiological elements or not. Yes. But it seems to me that if the physiological aspects are understood; if a person realizes that the potential for a

*The Beyond Within: The LSD Story, Sidney Cohen, Athenium Books, N.Y., 1972.

divine or mystical revelation exists within himself, it becomes more meaningful than if he believes the experience originated from an external God.

In 1962, Walter Pahnke did an experiment which clearly demonstrated the potential of psychedelics to bring about a religious experience.* The renowned "Good Friday Experiment" (Leary calls it "The Miracle of Marsh Chapel") was a carefully planned project; a double blind study which proved unquestionably that psilocybin used in an appropriate setting could help bring about a religious experience. Pahnke listed nine basic characteristics which are common to the religious experience, (either drug-induced or not) among which transcendence is ranked high on the list.

That man is capable of having a religious experience is nothing new; history is filled with references to such events. What seems to be alarming to the fundamentalist Christian churches of today is that such an experience can be brought about by use of a chemical. The conventional churches have declared almost unanimously that such experiences are <u>not</u> from God, and they are certainly not going to try it to find out. If such churches were to recognize the psychedelic experience as a valid spiritual or divine inspiration, the existing or-

*Pahnke briefly describes this experiment and adds other comments relating religion and LSD in "LSD and Religious Experience" from <u>LSD, Man, and Society</u> by Debold and Leaf, editors. Wesleyan Press, Middletown, Conneticut, 1967.

ganizational fabric of the church would be in deep need of radical overhaul. Perhaps it is.

It is not at all surprising to me that psychedelics have religious significance. All information on which we base our attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and expectations is at some point processed through the brain and nervous system, and there is no way we can deny the factor of the brain's operation in formulating our religious convictions. Only recently have scientists developed means sophisticated enough to begin to understand the operation of the brain, and the vast complexity of interacting biochemical and chemoelectric energy systems which influences formulation of thought and perception. Little wonder that accurate manipulation of these systems (such as the insertion of psychedelic drugs) would produce profound effects on our belief systems.

I cannot subscribe to the theory that psychedelic drugs will destroy people's belief in God. What is more likely is that we will have to recognize how to incorporate these phenomena into our belief system in a way which integrates both the old, concrete objectivity of fundamentalists with the dynamic, startling, subjective experiences of psychedelic revelations.

Nor can I follow exactly Leary's "Brain is God" arguments.* No matter how profound my understanding of the world

*Changing My Mind, Among Others, by Timothy Leary, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1982.

becomes, no matter how many revisions I make in my thinking to accomodate an ever-increasing wealth of knowledge about external aspects of my universe, there will always be something beyond, something more to learn in order to gain progressively accurate approximations as to how, when, and where I am supposed to coordinate my spirit and being in the kaleidoscope of an ever-changing universe. The brain not only enables its owner to know what and who he is, but also what and who he is <u>not</u>. "Brain is a microGod" seems to be a more fitting phrase. In using psychedelics as sacraments, we should not treat our brain (or body) as if they have unlimited capabilities, nor constrict them to our own imperfect definitions of what is possible and what is impossible.

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About two thousand years ago, Jesus said,

> "All who live by the sword
> shall perish by the sword."*

I don't think we would be stretching the truth too much to give this statement the following contemporary translation:

> "All who live by the bomb
> shall perish by the bomb."

Are you listening, Mr. RayGun?

*Matthew 26:52

## The Peyote Way

## Church of God

On November 11, 1980, a small group of Peyote Way Church of God members were on their way to gather peyote from the deserts of Texas for use as a sacrament in their spiritual rituals. Police from nearby Richardson arrested the members, but the charges were later dropped because of an illegal search. But the members of the church would still face harassment and possible criminal charges at any time in the future if they went back to collect more peyote. The police, having records of the first bungled attempt to stop these gentle folk from obtaining their sacrament, would surely be inclined to handle a future situation in more careful compliance with the law.

What course of legal action could the church take to insure their right to go back to Texas to collect peyote without interference from law enforcement agencies? The fault is not with the police, who are only doing their job in enforcing the law as it is written, but with the law itself. Texas civil statutes grant protection to people using peyote as a sacrament *if* they can prove they are a member of the Native American Church, *and* have at least twenty-five percent indian blood. A civil suit would be necessary to have the courts recognize that such a statute is discriminatory.

Now the Peyote Way Church of God is officially recognized by their home state of Arizona. Their articles of incorporation were filed and notorized by the Ari-

zona State Corporation Commission on May 11, 1979. Although the church is not affiliated with the Native American Church, they do have the same protection under the Arizona Revised Statutes as the Native American Church (or any other church) to procure and use peyote in bona fide religious ceremonies. The Texas law however, not only singles out the Native American Church, but also singles out a specific racial group (indians) for protection.

> "The provisions of this Act relating to the possession and distribution of peyote shall not apply to the use of peyote by members of the Native American Church in bona fide religious ceremonies of the church. ...The exemption granted to members of the Native American Church under this section does not apply to a member with less than twenty-five percent indian blood."*

The Texas statute is clearly making a special law for a specific race and religion, so the Peyote Way Church people therefore took the case to attorney Richard Allen in Dallas and filed a suit against the state. If a favorable ruling is made, the state will have to change its laws, and the Peyote Way Church members will be allowed to get their peyote.

Cases such as this involving fundamental freedoms often bog down in the quagmire of bureaucracy and red tape before a

*Texas Civil Statutes, Food and Drugs Article 4476-15, Section 4.11

decision is handed down, and this one seems to be no exception. Conceivably, it could go before the state Supreme Court, and take several years before being heard. New Mexico and Arizona both have statutes allowing religious use of peyote, but they don't talk about specific churches or racial groups as does the Texas law.

The Native American Church has a well-established right to use peyote which has been upheld by courts over other laws banning peyote because it was an integral part of the indians' religious ceremonies long before the law was enacted. The Peyote Way Church does not restrict their membership to a specific racial heritage as the Native American Church does, so a favorable outcome in this lawsuit could conceivably set a precedent to allow other non-racist peyote-using churches to form in other states.

Even the most conservative definitions of religious practice would have to recognize the Peyote Way Church of God. Like the Mormons, they recognize Joseph Smith as a prophet, and like other conventional churches, they recognize the Bible, the ritual of baptism, and the teachings of Jesus as instrumental in achieving their goal: "...to introduce communicants to the Light of Christ: to teach the awareness and presence of Christ within."* The use of peyote is not required; rather it is an option, and is carefully controlled. Peyote is never referred to as a drug; always as a sac-

*Revised Bylaws for the Peyote Way Church of God, Annotation II, Sacramental Procedures.

ramental psychedelic or a Holy Sacrament.

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 effects 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 intrest of promoting morality, industriousness, charity, and self-respect among its members, the church has some rather rigorous bylaws. Their 160 acres in southeast Arizona is loved and well cared for by resident members, who support the church by donations for, and the sale of pottery at nearby towns. Work days are twelve to fourteen hours for resident members; visitors are not expected to carry a share of the work load, 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 purification 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 use of peyote is limited to the Spirit Walk--and then only with the blessing of the church leaders.

These restrictions and rigorous rules of the church are good in several ways.

It keeps out the freeloaders and thrill-seekers; the recreationalists and those who want to use the "religious freedom" clause as an excuse to have all the high times they want. No one will long survive in the Peyote Way Church of God who is not seriously dedicated to the idea that peyote can provide a spiritually meaningful experience, or who cannot at least recognize that it can be so for some people. Such rules also help promote a sober consciousness, a reverent respect for God, and harmonious love for fellow men. While conventional churches have much the same goals, it hardly seems fair to discriminate against those who partake of peyote to achieve these goals. It obviously works, or the use of peyote as a spiritual aid would have collapsed centuries ago.

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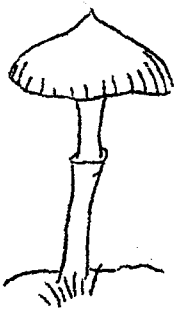

## The Church of the

## Tree of Life

The Church of the Tree of Life was first formed about 1972 in San Francisco, California. Their main objective is to preserve as sacraments the natural plants and some synthetic drugs which are now legal, by declaring them as sacramental substances before the law can put a total ban on them. All the remaining legal hallucinogens have been declared, and a number of other drugs, such as stimulants, controversial vitamins such as laetrile, and hypnotic sedatives have also been declared.

The center of this loosly knit organization's belief is the idea that each person is sovereign over his own body, and may ingest whatever he pleases, so long as there is no harm to others. They have nothing to say about God, Satan, heaven, hell, or afterlife; these subjects are left to each individual member.

The church publishes a statement of their sacraments, identifies each by its botanical name, tells what chemicals each contains, and gives a brief historical review of how the sacrament has been traditionally used.* It's informative and has photographs, and also includes references to related literature.

CTOL also produces a quarterly bulliten called Barkleaf which lets members know what new sacraments are under consideration, what legislation affects po-

*The First Book of Sacraments by the Church of the Tree of Life, Jhon Mann, editor.

tential sacraments, and tips on appropriate use and dosage. Barkleaf is an extension of the First Book of Sacraments as well as being an update on church activities.

The idea of declaring these substances as sacraments is an interesting and worthy cause. I would certainly agree that legislation has already made too many inroads on personal freedoms with respect to psychedelics. But I'm inclined to think, "If this is a religious organization, where is the religion?" If, for example, one of their current sacraments was outlawed, and the church went to court, arguing that it was used as a sacrament before the law existed, there would be a possibility that the courts would reject their argument on the grounds that they have no systematic religious practice established.*

I think just such a case could likely come up. There are some declared sacraments which are synthetic compounds just a molecule or two outside existing laws, and these will surely be under close surveillance by the DEA. The DEA will be watching for social effects from misuse, as well as keeping an eye on total sales through quantity dealers. But it seems reasonable to assume that if no social problems can be associated with such drugs, they are going to be less concerned about public use. CTOL's publications are valuable in this respect, since they do describe how the various drugs

(continued on p. 41)

*Webster defines religion as "a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices".

## The Fane of the

## Psilocybe Mushroom Association

The Fane of the Psilocybe Mushroom Association was formed as a loosely-knit organization about 1973. However, the official recognition of the Association by the Canadian government as a non-profit organization did not occur until the fall of 1979. After a brief flurry of correspondence with the Registrar of Companies in British Columbia during which minor adjustments were made in their Constitution, the final copy was filed and certified on January 22, 1980.

Preparation of the Fane's Constitution took considerable work on the part of the early members and officers. The purpose of the Association is to encourage Enlightenment, which is the realization that life is a dream, and the externality of relations is an illusion, and also to promote the social and religious welfare of the community. The bylaws give equal rights to all members, as well as requiring dues payment. (Failure to pay dues could result in loss of membership.) Biannual meetings are held twice a year, and special meetings can be called by agreement of ten percent of the members. There is nothing secretive about the Fane--its records are open to inspection by all members. The bylaws also allow for the formation of independently governed branch organizations known as "Spores", but use of the Fane's name requires written permission.

Although magic mushrooms were legal at the time the Fane was incorporated, it

became clear that legislative processes were under way to have psilocybe mushrooms restricted on a basis equal to that of the isolated drug psilocybin.

On November 14, 1980, President Ethan Marcano wrote to the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association to ask for their help in maintaining the legality of the Fane's sacrament. The B.C.C.L.A. offered their sympathy, but pointed out that their intervention would only be helpful if a bill were introduced to Parliament which would change the laws. The Fane also submitted a proposal to the Senate Special Committee on the Constitution for the insertion of a subclause to fundamental Freedom of Religion in the Canadian Constitution:

> "Everyone has the right to expand consciousness and to stimulate aesthetic, visionary, and mystical experience by whatever means one considers desirable without interference from anyone, so long as such practice does not injure another person or their property."

The clerk of the committee acknowleged receipt of the Fane's proposal, and promised to circulate a copy of the proposal to the members of the committee.

The Fane didn't have long to wait before a test case was scheduled to come before the Supreme Court. The outcome of this case in relation to the existing laws would have significant bearing on whether the Fane could legally continue to use magic mushrooms as a sacrament. A negative decision would mean their sacra-

ment would be regulated by the Food and Drug Act.

On January 28, 1981, Ethan sent two more letters, one addressed to the Victoria Civil Liberties Association, and the other to the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association asking for their advice and help in preventing the legislation from including the sacred mushrooms under control of the Food and Drug Act. The B.C.C.L.A. then wrote to Monique Begin, Minister of Health and Welfare in Parliment, defining their support of the Fane's sacramental use of mushrooms, and asking for opportunity for public hearings.

Ms. Begin replied that there would be an opportunity for a hearing. But the judges of the Supreme Court are insulated from the public by uncountable layers of procedural regulations and protocol. The Fane therefore enlisted the services of attorney Alan J. Short to organize the paperwork and wade through the bureaucratic red tape necessary to present a motion to the Supreme Court.

Now the case before the court concerned one Barry Wayne Dunn, (not associated with the Fane) who had earlier been snagged by legal webs, and the Fane wanted to present their case as an interested third party, since the outcome of the Dunn case would affect the rights of the Fane with regard to use of magic mushrooms as a religious sacrament.

Ethan went to Alan Short's office on April 13, 1982, and described the gravity of the Fane's intrest in the upcoming case, which was scheduled for April 29th. It seems that laws regulating interven-

tion of a third party in a court case have a requirement that the motion would have to be filed so many days in advance to be recognized. Short explained that it was a time-squeeze situation, but he nevertheless proceeded to draw up the papers for the submission of the Notice of Motion to be heard.

In the meantime, President Marcano wasn't just sitting around waiting. He drew up a special edition of the Fane's newsletter to ask support of all members in paying for the services of the attorney who had proceeded with the legal paperwork on faith. In that issue, Ethan wrote:

> "...The Fane's upcoming legal costs of $2500 is a mere pittance against the value of psychedelic liberty, and the privelege of presenting the Fane's position before the highest court in the land, thus protecting the new Constitution and Bill of Rights from a legal decision which without the Fane's intervention may otherwise instantly destroy the credability of the Constitution...Let's pull together on this, folks!"*

It was a valiant effort put forth by all members of the Fane as well as by their attorney. But the rigors of regulation refused to bend, even for such an important issue as the preservation of right to religious sacrament. Mr. Alan Short's documents were returned to him

*Sporadic #4, Spring, 1982.

with the notice that "...under Rule 60, the last day for service and filing would be...the 20th of April." Mr. Short's papers representing the Fane had arrived April 21st.

So it goes. Mr. Short expressed the opinion that the appeal failed not because of any disintrest the courts had in hearing their side of the story, but because of the "Rule 60" technical obstruction. In a final letter to the Fane, he commended the directors of the Fane for the effort they had put forth on behalf of their members, and acknowleged that there would be opportunities for the Fane to express their intrest in future cases.

Barry Wayne Dunn lost his case, magic mushrooms were ruled illegal in Canada, and the Fane members would now face possible criminal charges for the simple act of pursuing their religious beliefs.

But they were not ready to give up the ship. On November 25th, Marcano again petitioned the B.C.C.L.A. for help in making a court challenge or Constitutional exemption, pointing out that "Religious freedom may even be the wellspring for freedom in general;...this is why one usually finds it as the first article of most constitutional democracies."

The B.C.C.L.A. was almost apologetic in their response. R.H. Robson, president of B.C.C.L.A., seemed sympathetic to the plight of the Fane, but doubtful that his organization could effectively help the situation. Nevertheless, Mr. Robson promised to present the material before the executive board for consideration.

The Fane resopnded to Mr. Robson's doubts just a few days before the situation was scheduled to be presented to the executive board, again emphasizing the fundamental significance of the right to freely pursue a chosen religious life:

> "...we generally consider it an imposition that we should have to engage in any assertions and legal wranglings regarding our rights... The Fane administers to a growing congregation of individuals and families...it would indeed be a sad chapter in the history of Canada were these people to find themselves arbitrarily subject to the terrorism of religious repression.".*

But the Fane nevertheless offered to help the financial aspects of B.C.C.L.A., and suggested that their case would be further strengthened if B.C.C.L.A. would pool their resources with other civil liberties unions.

The Fane is currently soliciting testimonials (anonomous or otherwise) of a spiritual or religious nature which can be used to present a sizable volume of material to enter into court documents to establish their case. If you feel their right to use psilocybians as sacraments are truly inalienable, you should seriously consider contributing such a testament to the Fane. Their address is given on p. 23. Don't delay; do it today!

*Letter to B.C.C.L.A. from the Fane, January 20, 1983.

## Conclusion

The formation of religious organizations claiming psychedelics as sacraments has occurred quite a number of times since the 1960's when psychedelics became popular. Though most have not had much success, the fact that they keep appearing again and again indicates there is a very fundamental drive operating which motivates these people to undertake a venture which to straight-thinking society must seem doomed to failure. But those who become involved in the formation of these churches feel it is inevitable; an inner force drives them to continue trying, no matter how many failures have gone before, or how high the risk of rejection and retribution. The early Christians faced much the same situation.

All the churches described in this issue attempt to the best of their ability to operate within the framework of the law. They are not violent revolutionaries, seeking to destroy other churches, nor foot-stomping fanatics insisting that theirs is "the Only Way, and if you don't do as you're told, God will cook you over a fire". They are kindly and tolerent toward others' beliefs, and for the most part, seldom have troubles with the law, except in situations involving their declared sacraments.

They are concerened not only about their own members safety and health, but also about society in general. They all distribute accurate information about the use of psychedelic sacraments, how to use them properly and avoid misuse while realizing spiritual benefit. Within any

organization, intracommunication is of crucial importance for the survival of the whole. The psychedelic experience itself speaks emphatically of communication, and any serious adherent to spiritual values will recognize that communication is a necessary foundation for the success of organizational cohesion.

Because communication is relevent in this respect, and because these churches are all in a fledgling state, it seems inevitable that eventually we will see the formation of a congress on the use of psychedelics as sacraments. Such a meeting of people heading these various churches (there are undoubtably others I'm not aware of) could be used to discuss relevant laws concerning psychedelics and religious freedoms, and to map strategies for effectively dealing with those laws. Economic resources are needed, for court battles are often long and very expensive. Interchurch differences could be recognized and discussed with an eye to compromising opposing views and coordinating divergent goals. And finally, such a conference would inevitably attract the attention of legislators and cause them to recognize that the rights of psychedelic churches are as inalienable as the rights of any other church. The activities could be published in a small paper for distribution to members of each church. If this is what it takes to have psychedelic sacraments released from the constricting coils of law enforcement, it's time to get on with it.

The addresses of churches discussed in this issue are listed below for those

who care to write for more information. They are all operating with limited budgets, so when asking for information, it would be thoughtful to send a dollar or two to cover postage and printing expenses. You'll always have money for the things you put first.

Peyote Way Church of God
Bonita Route Box 7X
Willcox, AZ 85643

Church of the Tree of Life
401 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94133

The Fane of the Psilocybe Mushroom
Box 1295, Stn. E
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 2W3

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Transcendental Trivia

Make your old enemies
Your new friends.

Forever is Now;
Now is Forever.

Forget about doing it perfect next time.
Remember to do it better than last time.

Psychedelics are Mind's best friend.

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