

*This book is for Peter Hitchens*



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## INTRODUCTION

# The Condition Our Condition Is In

The complete legalization of marijuana seems like an idea whose time has come. As I write these words, the recreational use of marijuana is legal in twelve states, and medical marijuana is now accepted in thirty-four states. The drug remains against the law at the federal level, but there doesn't seem to be any real interest at all in strict enforcement. For many observers, it seems that legalization at the federal level is only a matter of time.

In addition, this movement toward legal status has been paralleled by a great increase in social and cultural acceptance. Nobody wants to be seen as buying into any

throwback *Reefer Madness* frenzy. Opposition to legal weed is now quite easily represented as the hidebound opinions of mindless traditionalists. In addition, these traditionalists, many of whom enjoy a good martini, are characterized as inconsistent and hypocritical. They have for some reason drawn an arbitrary line against someone *e/se's* kicks.

So marijuana has been around in a markedly public way for a generation now. But this has been in its own way a contributor to some significant misunderstanding. We think we have been dealing with the same drug all this time, but in a fundamental way, that is not exactly true.

The active ingredient in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), and the toxicity of a Woodstock joint was relatively low—a modest amount of THC. Today the levels can get a *lot* higher, just like the user. And there are a number of people who are now using extracts that are almost entirely pure THC. Whatever kick that mule had back in the seventies, it is about four to six times more than that now. This is kind of like the difference between a Bud Light and a shot of Old Gym Sock Corn Whiskey. Sure, there is alcohol in both, but still . . .

Also, in the seventies, it was common for people to say they were “experimenting” with drugs. And individuals *were* experimenting with them, and our culture as a whole was experimenting with them. But we are actually in quite a different place now. We have enough data now to be able to say that the experiment has already been run. We have had a generation or more of widespread

drug use. If we are willing to look at the results, the results are actually in.

We have had many tens of thousands who participated in this *ad hoc* research project. And we have had plenty of research done on the individuals who were using drugs. There were many volunteers. The results are now gathered, and I hope to point to some of the results of this *ad hoc* research later on in this book. And though the culture-wide experiment was somewhat loose, there have been a number of rigorous studies of various subsets within that broader culture.

This being the introductory chapter, my comments concerning all such issues will of necessity be introductory. For more detail, you are cordially invited to read through the rest of the book.

Regardless, despite the obvious and predictable outcome, these results are also largely being ignored. Many know what they would *like* the truth to be, but they have been more influenced by a pro-marijuana lobbying effort than anybody really recognizes. In the battles for establishing medical marijuana and for legalizing recreational marijuana, the monetary investment of the pro-pot forces has been massive. The worshipers of Mammon have known for a long time that there is big money to be made from large numbers of people who have managed to acquire a bad habit. There's gold in them thar potheads.

Not only so, but a number of overreaching politicians seem to have figured out that they might have a significantly easier time governing a nation of lotus

## CHAPTER ONE

# Is Marijuana Like Alcohol?

One of the stumbling blocks for Christians is that they don't know all that much about marijuana, but they do live in a Christian culture that has largely (but fairly recently) accepted the moderate drinking of alcohol. The old-time evangelicalism of their great-grandparents was as dry as Ezekiel's valley of bones, but those days are now clearly in the rearview mirror.

Alcohol has been newly accepted, so is it now time for us to unbend just a little bit more? Perhaps we should



do with marijuana what a previous generation did with beer and wine.

Maybe this is simply a generational divide. One generation likes a dry martini after work, and a new generation prefers a smoky kick. Couldn't it just be a matter of generational taste? One prefers a smoky kick with actual smoke, while the other wants the smoky kick of Laphroaig, which, as the ad copy once put it, "tastes like a burning hospital."

One of the things that set us up for our previous change in attitude about alcohol was the apparent failure of Prohibition. It would be a rare discussion of marijuana if the subject of Prohibition did not come up. During *that* ill-fated venture, we supposedly learned the futility of trying to legislate morality, particularly morality when it comes to this sort of issue—the use of chemical additives to make your head buzz—and so how are we not falling into the same trap again with this "war against drugs?"

I should mention in passing here the important point that keeping drugs illegal and conducting a "war on drugs" should not be considered the same thing. More about that later.

The first thing that needs to be said here is that what I write should not be taken as a brief for Prohibition. I *do* think Prohibition was a bad idea. But a couple of things should be said in defense of those who urged it, and were so motivated that they got the Constitution successfully amended—no easy feat—in pursuit of their

## CHAPTER TWO

# Sobriety and Drunkenness

As we consider the biblical teaching on marijuana use, we should want to take a close look at what the Scriptures teach about drunkenness. Although there is not a close parallel between alcohol and marijuana (as we discussed in the previous chapter), there *is* a close analogy between being drunk and being stoned.

Any fair-minded reader of the Scriptures will come away with the impression that the Bible takes a dim view of being drunk. We will look at that teaching in close detail here, then look at some examples of drunkenness

in the historical narrative, and then draw some applications to the question of marijuana use. At the end of the chapter we will look at some of the positive things that Scripture says about alcohol—and show how those descriptions do not apply to marijuana use.

Sins are like grapes; they come in bunches. In a number of the passages I cite here, please notice how drunkenness keeps sorry company. Sins tend to cluster, and when you go down into the middle of that crowd, you are more likely to find a pot dealer there than, say, if you were at a quilting bee.

Let's begin with an observation from the apostle Peter:

*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. (1 Pet. 4:3-4)*

What these people have in common is that they are all engaged in a hedonistic pursuit of sensual pleasure. They all want to get laid and loaded. The name of the game is sensory overload. Now if I were looking for a place to shelve “stoned out of his gourd,” would I be more likely to put it after *joy* and before *peace*, or after *excess of wine* and before *revelling*?

And when a phrase like *excess of riot* is used, the apostle Peter is expecting us to be able to fill in the

## CHAPTER THREE

# More Superficial Comparisons

Suppose all this is granted, but a further question is asked. What about the fellow who is not wiped out? He smokes marijuana but remains (at least in his own mind) fully functional. He grants that “drunkenness” is always wrong but denies that marijuana has to produce “drunkenness.” Why cannot cannabis provide an equivalent experience to wine gladdening the heart of man (Ps. 104:15)?

We have to look at this argument carefully. We have seen that drunkenness is flatly prohibited by Scripture,

but we have to recognize that other uses of alcohol are approved and encouraged throughout the Bible.

In order to do this, we must back up. According to the Bible, alcohol has at least five lawful scriptural uses. Let's look at each and see if there is a parallel to marijuana at that point. The last one we will consider is the "gladden the heart" argument.

The first use of alcohol is sacramental.

*And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (Matt. 26:27–29)*

From Genesis to Revelation, we have no scriptural warrant for the use of drugs in worship. While this is a feature of numerous unbelieving sects and cults, it has no part of biblical worship. God does require wine in the Lord's Supper, but He does not require any use of marijuana sacramentally.

Wine also has medicinal value. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). Here we have to say that marijuana *could* be scripturally lawful if it were being used in a genuinely medicinal way. With this said, at the same time, we have to say that the current political push to allow for the medicinal use of marijuana does have a hidden agenda behind it—the issue is not medicine, but

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Meaning of Liberty

In order to speak intelligently about the rights and wrongs of marijuana use, we must early on establish what kind of world we are discussing the question in. And the question that is hovering in the background of all such discussion is this: What is the meaning of liberty? In order to make any progress at all when it comes to understanding the use of marijuana, we have to know what freedom is. We also have to discuss it, and work through it carefully, with very sober minds. That means