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THE USE AND ABUSE OF DRUGS.

In recent years there has been a great increase in the taking of drugs by young people in this country, and even by children. The taking by the young of marihuana, amphetamines, barbiturates, LSD, and the derivatives of opium, especially heroin, has become a serious problem for the whole country, and especially for parents. There is nothing new about the abuse of drugs. Arguments about the use and abuse of Cannabis, the hemp plant from which marihuana is obtained, were recorded in China over 4,600 years ago. The abuse of other drugs is also very old, as for example the abuse of alcohol related in the Word in the story of Noah. What is new is the turning of so many of the young people in this country to such abuses. The problem has become one that everyone has to consider in some form or another, and it is therefore useful to review the principles which should guide the thoughts and feelings of those of the Church with regard to it.

Most drugs have some definite use. For the most part these are medical uses, for the cure or prevention of diseases, for the relief of physical pains and mental tensions. Some have a use as mild stimulants, such as tea and coffee. Wine, which contains alcohol, has the highest symbolic use in the Holy Supper. Wine and other alcoholic liquors are used also socially, and as foods, and as means of relaxation. As to the real use of drugs, it would be better that a man be guided by his physician as to the use of any of them.

The main reason why people take drugs, apart from their proper use, is because they produce euphoria. Euphoria is "A feeling of well-being, of elation, especially one that is groundless, disproportionate to its cause, or inappropriate to one's life situation." (Webster.) It is thus a feeling of well-being artificially brought about. Some drugs are such that there is a physical dependency on them. With others there is a psychological dependency, and with some, both. Some are more harmful than others to the body and mind of man. In some cases, the harm done to the body or mind or both is beyond dispute. In other cases, the harm done has not yet been scientifically determined. Because of the recent upsurge in the taking of drugs by the young, much research has recently been instituted in order to discover what the different drugs actually do to a man. It is to be hoped that this research will be increased, and that definitive findings beyond dispute will be made. Unfortunately this may take considerable time. Bodily harm done by certain forms of smoking tobacco have only been seriously considered in recent years, although the smoking habit has been with us for hundreds of years.

It is important that people should learn about the drugs, especially parents of young people and children, and keep themselves informed as to the findings of the researches being made. It is not good to confront the young people and children with arguments based merely on emotion or panic and ignorance. Opposition to the taking of drugs is necessary, but enlightened opposition is far more effective than unenlightened opposition.

When some disorder such as this taking of drugs first arises, people

have to judge about it from the individual cases which they know or have heard about. From this, generalizations are made which are sometimes not true. As we know in the case of alcohol, for some alcohol is wholly destructive to the whole life of a man but in other cases it is not. So also in the case of the abuse of the milder or "soft" drugs, with some the results are terrible, and with others not so terrible. With some the taking of the milder drugs leads on to the taking of the less mild ones and to horrible waste of human lives, and with others it does not lead on to this. Unfortunately there is no way of telling ahead of time what hidden preconditions or influences are going to make this difference. The number of tragedies brought on by alcohol alone is enough to cause one to wonder whether its social uses are worth the risk to those unfortunates who will destroy their lives by the abuse of it. And this is even more the case with other drugs, whose effect on the mind is more immediate. The number of people, especially now among the young, who go from the milder to the harder drugs is frightening, and the number of tragedies, broken lives, suicides, murders, laid to the taking of drugs is also frightening. The argument is sometimes raised in favor of the taking of drugs that the milder ones are no worse than the abuse of alcohol. This is not a very good argument. There is no use in the abuse of alcohol, only very great harm. Why should human society want to add another such danger to itself?

Researchers have come up with a number of reasons why the young people of today are taking to the drugs. They find that the majority of those taking the drugs first do it from curiosity. Other young people tell them about the wonders of it, and they feel they must try it. Others take to it because, for various reasons, they feel shut out or separated from society, and in taking drugs with others they feel a group identity in which they have a place. Many begin it because they feel that they would be left out of some group of people that they like, if they did not take drugs. As a general reason as to why this generation of young people take to drugs, more than previous generations, the writers on the subject hold out the tensions caused by the possibility of nuclear destruction, racial conflicts, overpopulation, and now the dangers of environmental pollution. Also some take drugs because they suppose that they come into spiritual experiences by means of them.

One conclusion by a researcher, (Gillie) is that "Drugs are a veil which mask the real causes of much psychological illness and distress." Another researcher, Dr. Blum, says, "There will be no solution to our drug problems until we put our minds in order; until really, we decide what our minds are for." These two statements may have much truth in them, but no comfort. According to the first one, there must be a tremendous increase in psychological illness and distress in the present generation to account for the increase in the taking of drugs, and since no one knows the answers to the illness nor the distress, we can't expect any improvement in the situation. As to the second, we know that there has been disorder in the minds of men for thousands of years, and not much success in putting them into order. Also we know that with the breakdown of the Christian Churches and the loss of genuine faith, nobody knows what their minds are for, and they are not likely to find out what they are for by the methods presently seen as valid for discovering that, and the more they indulge in drugs, the less likely they are to find out what the minds are for.

Regarding the causes of the present upsurge in the abuse of drugs, one

must not underestimate the animal desire for pleasure. Animals also appear to like drugs, if exposed to them. And young people and children like anything that gives pleasure. Many of the young people take drugs for the "kick" it gives them. But still this does not answer the question as to why there is such an increase in the problem with the present generation of young people.

It appears to me that certain of the philosophical trends of modern times, when taken into combination with the stresses of the problems now facing human society, are partly responsible for the attitude of mind which could induce the young people to enter into these forms of insanity.

One is the concept of responsibility which has permeated this country during this century, a concept ruling in what is called "the new morality." This concept, expressed in my own terms, is that everybody is responsible for everybody else, but nobody is responsible for himself. Every individual failing is blamed on "society," and the individual is raised to regard himself as a product of society. At the same time he is made to feel directly responsible, as a unit of society, for all the troubles that take place in the whole world. This is the heart of the so called "new morality." As it does not recognize God, and man's relation to Him, it runs out to society as the only influence. But now you may ask, what has this to do with the drug problem? In the case of alcohol, I have noticed that some become alcoholics, or seek refuge in the euphoria produced by drinks, in order to escape from the tensions of responsibilities which they have to face and which they are not yet old enough to face. And if the young people are raised with the idea that they are in a large measure the ones who must bring solutions to the pressing problems of today, they can unknowingly have a drive to seek escape from it. They are unfitted to accept any responsibility with regard to those problems, and yet they are continually told by the mass media and by college professors that they must do something about these things.

Another philosophical concept that influences the young people of today is that which places all importance on merely subjective reality. The idea in this is that the only real thing to you is what you feel and think, your own individual experience, which may have no relation at all to others. This enables people to put a value on the subjective experiences of the drug victim. To them this is a real thing, just as real, perhaps even more real, than the things experienced in a rational life. The researchers quote an oft repeated phrase of the addicts, "I'm a person, not a thing." Others may be doctors, lawyers, ministers, workmen, but those are only things. They, in their dream-world, suppose that they have found themselves, their own identity. And they have about half of the so called philosophers of this day supporting them in this insanity. This subjective view of life does not really agree with the first idea of the new morality about man being a victim of society, but it appears to mesh very well with it in the minds of the young, the first supplying them with the supposed goods for which they are striving, and the second supplying them with the excuses for their abuse of drugs.

More interiorly the decay of the former Churches, the loss of faith in the Lord, or in God in any Human form, is certainly responsible for the bewilderment prevalent as to the use of the human mind, as to what it is for. This decay has been going on for a long time, and by itself does not explain why the sudden increase in the abuse of drugs by the young, now. But when you

consider it in relation to the other things brought forward by the researchers, and in connection with the modern philosophical concepts of life, one can begin to see why this modern situation is possible. . . . In the preceding centuries the Churches had more external influence, and also men were strongly motivated by external necessity of improving the material well-being in this country, that is, in the production of material things. Now, in the circumstance of society in this country being more affluent than any in history, that motivation for a sober, hard working life, is not so great, and the need for the external virtues taught by the Church, which supported that motivation for hard work, is not so great. This factor also makes possible, in connection with the philosophical factors and the new problems facing mankind today, the indulgence in drugs. People just don't see why they should not do so.

Those of the New Church have no excuse at all for the abuse of any drug, as far as the interior causes for such abuse are concerned. They know that their minds were created by the Lord for the end of the reception of His Divine, and for the reproduction of His Divine for the benefit of all the Heavens and all the human race. Anything that hurts the mind, or which hurts the order in which the mind can be opened to receive Heaven, to receive the celestial and spiritual from the Lord, is a thing wholly opposed to the Divine order, and is a sin.

The Word does not speak of the abuse of most drugs. It does speak of drunkenness, the abuse of alcohol. In the Spiritual Diary 2422 it is said: "Concerning Drunkenness. I spoke with spirits concerning drunkenness, and it was confirmed by them that it is an enormous sin, as well as that man becomes a brute, no longer a man, because that man is a man lies in the intellectual faculty, thus he becomes a brute, besides which he brings damage to his body, thus precipitates death, besides wasting in excess that which could be of use to many. And it appeared to them so filthy that they abhorred such a life, which, nevertheless, mortals have induced on themselves as civil."

It may be argued that drunkenness and the abuse of other drugs only temporarily impairs the intellectual faculty, and that a man is a brute only for a short time in such excesses. But when one considers the supreme importance of the intellectual faculty in relation to the reception of life from the Lord, and in relation to the presence of the Lord with man, it can be seen that for a man voluntarily to close off the use of that faculty is indeed paramount to his attempting to cast the Lord out of his own mind. The Lord is present in man in the faculties of liberty and rationality. Through those faculties the Lord enables man to see what is true in His Word, and to compel himself to live according to it. This is the whole means of man's reformation and regeneration, whereby his mind becomes what it was created for, the reception of the Divine of the Lord, and the reproduction of goods and trues from Him which make the happiness of Heaven. If a man should voluntarily do anything which harms the exercise of those faculties, even temporarily, he is directly sinning against the very reason for his being.

The influx of the Lord, the influx of Heaven comes through the faculties of liberty and rationality into the rational mind of man. There it appears to man as if that which inflowed into him from the Lord is his very own, as if it were himself. What he does in that appearance, out of those

faculties, is the means of the Lord's forming his spirit. Anything that destroys this reception of life in the rational of man, anything that attempts to make man feel that reality lies somewhere else, is against the whole working of the Divine Providence in the leading and teaching of man.

It has been held by some drug victims, and has even been taught by some supposed leaders of thought, that the experiences induced by the taking of drugs is a spiritual experience, that somehow man is thereby introduced into contact with celestial and spiritual things which otherwise lie above his consciousness. I have even seen it printed by certain ministers of the New Church that drug experience may be one way of man's finding contact with God. It can only be said that such men understand nothing whatsoever of the teachings of the Third Testament. It is beyond belief that anyone could think that the Lord could give anyone things celestial or spiritual before that man has been prepared through reformation and regeneration to receive them. Such a thing would lead to the greatest profanation. Those who are under the influence of drugs experience nothing spiritual, but only that which is sensual.

Consider the teaching given in the Divine Providence that man cannot be reformed through miracles, or through speech with the dead, because such things compel. (D.P. 129-134.) Such things force belief on the mind of man, and therefore close his rational to Heaven, and do not open it. If it were possible that man could come to anything whatsoever of spiritual faith or feeling through drugs, such a thing would destroy man, and close Heaven to him. Fortunately for mankind, the Lord prevents any such possibility. The things reported of their experiences by drug victims, the seeing of forms, the keener sensations, the increased appreciation of what is in things, are nothing but sensual things, supposedly refined. The things brought forward by those who have visions and who have speech with the dead are more sensible, but they also, when examined, have nothing of any spiritual truth or good in them.

It is to be noted that when the Word speaks of the impossibility of man's being reformed in states of compulsion, that teaching does not refer to external compulsion by others. Such external compulsion can only make a man say or do something. It cannot make him think or believe or love something. It is the interior compulsion, the compulsion that makes a man think a thing, or love it, by external means, that is there spoken of. If drugs could make a man think or love anything spiritual, that would be a compulsion of this kind. But all the drugs can do is to close the rational of man to any influx out of Heaven.

There is nothing in the Word, or in the Doctrine drawn out of the Word, that can excuse the abuse of drugs, much less encourage anyone to take them. All the teachings of the Third Testament show that such partaking of drugs is contrary to the Divine Order.

The Problem facing this country in relation to this disorder is very great at this time. Those of the Church who are parents, or who have responsibility for young people and children, should consider the principles of the Church here brought forward and see them clearly so that they can put them

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into forms that the children and young people can grasp in some way. And they should keep themselves informed as to the things being brought forward in the world in relation to this problem. They must also cooperate with the efforts of the community in which they live to control and remove this disorder. Those of the Church can see more clearly than others the harm in the abuse of drugs. But they must make their opposition an enlightened one also by the knowledge on the natural plane brought forward in the world.