

There is nothing ascetic, or monastic, or gloomy in the religion of the Bible. Its tone is cheerful. Amusement—meaning by the term pastimes which engage the mind in a pleasant and entertaining way—are, in their proper place and degree, as truly necessary for a man's nature as food, or drink, or sleep. The religion of Christ, instead of seeking to banish them altogether from life, aims to subdue them to itself, to surround them with a healthy influence, and to make them useful for us and for God. It is true there are amusements which are utterly irreligious. It is also true that some, which in the beginning were harmless, have been usurped by the devil. But there are many which are not only allowable for Christians, but Christians are best qualified to develop their highest uses, and to enjoy them without abusing them. How can we discriminate between the proper and the improper recreations of social life? The young especially are often embarrassed in the settlement of this question.

Of course, amusements which violate the Decalogue should never be participated in. It is a wretched kind of pleasure which runs against a Divine commandment. Not even in fun should any moral law be broken. Equally decided should be the statement that amusements which shock a person's sense of delicacy ought to be looked upon with suspicion. Whatever is coarse in word or in act, or is calculated to suggest coarse thoughts, even if no precept could be cited against it, should be avoided like poison. Indecency should not even be jested with.

God has given all human beings a moral sensitiveness which ought to have all the force of a positive precept. It may be worn away. People meet us everywhere who show that through persistent abuse they have almost totally destroyed their sense of manly honor, and their sense of female delicacy. We hear of dancing parties, for instance, in which female dresses violate all the rules of modesty, and in which men and women who are not related closely embrace each other as they go through the giddy whirl. Against such abuses the young need to be placed especially on their guard. Those, who once lose their delicacy of feeling, lose a treasure that can never in this life be fully regained. Their native sensitiveness should be guarded as a precious possession.

The rule has also the force of a moral law that no amusements should be indulged in which have a tendency to injure the health of the body. The only rational object for which recreations can be entered upon is to rest the body and relax the mind, and fit both the better for the continued discharge of life's serious duties. Whatever injures the body is a sin against God. Whatever wastes its vitality is an offence. Of course this cuts at the root of all vicious indulgence and licentious pleasures.

Recreations, too, that almost inevitably run into excesses, and by which the body is jaded instead of rested, and the mind is unduly excited instead of calmed and relaxed, cannot be vindicated even on the low ground of true bodily pleasure.

On this principle there are amusements which some natures can participate in with safety, while to others they would be dangerous. All games of chance, if they were not wrong in themselves, would be unsafe for the mass of people, especially for the young, because their whole tendency is to an exciting and wasteful dissipation, and to other vices and sins which are almost invariably associated with them. Evening parties and company may be run after to an extent that really undermines the physical system, and plants the seeds of disease; and when so pursued they become morally wrong. Further, all amusements which lead into dangerous scenes, or into