

INNOCENT AMUSEMENTS.

It is not innocent to engage in amusement to gratify the desire for amusement. We may not innocently eat or drink to gratify the desire for food or drink. To eat or drink merely to gratify appetite is innocent enough in a mere animal, but in a moral agent it is sin. A moral agent is bound to have a higher ultimate motive—to eat and drink that he may be strong and healthy for the service of God. God has made eating and drinking pleasant to us; but this pleasure ought not to be our ultimate reason for eating and drinking. So amusements are pleasant, but this does not justify us in seeking amusements to gratify desire. Mere animals may do this innocently, because they are incapable of any higher motive. But moral agents are under a higher law, and are bound to have another and a higher aim than merely to gratify the desire for amusements. Therefore, no amusement is innocent which is engaged in for the pleasure of the amusement, any more than it would be innocent to eat and drink for the pleasure of it. Again, no amusement is innocent that is engaged in because we need amusements. We need food and drink; but this does not justify us in eating and drinking simply because we need it. The law of God does not say, "Seek whatever ye need because ye need it;" but "Do all from love to God and man." Nothing is innocent unless it proceeds from supreme love to God and equal love to man, unless the supreme and ultimate motive be to please and honor God. In other words, to be innocent, any amusement must be engaged in, because it is believed to be at the time, most pleasing to God, and is intended to be a service rendered to Him, as that which, upon the whole, will honor Him more than anything else that we can engage in for the time being. I take this to be self-evident. What then? It follows: 1st. That none but benevolent amusements can be innocent. Fishing and shooting for amusement is not innocent. We may fish and hunt for the same reason that we are allowed to eat and drink—to supply nature with aliment, that we may be strong in the service of God. We may hunt to destroy noxious animals, for the glory of God, and to the interests of His kingdom. But fishing and hunting to gratify a passion for these sports is not innocent. Again, no amusement can be innocent that involves the squandering of precious time, that might be better employed to the glory of God and the good of man. Life is short. Time is precious. We have but one life to live. Much is to be done. The world is in darkness. A world of sinners is to be enlightened, and, if possible, saved. We are required to work while the day lasteth. Our commission and work require dispatch. No time is to be lost. If our hearts are right, our work is pleasant. If rightly performed, it affords the highest enjoyment and is itself the highest amusement. No turning aside for amusement can be innocent that involves any unnecessary loss of time. No man that realizes the greatness of the work to be done and loves to do it can turn aside for any amusement involving an unnecessary waste of time. Again, no amusement can be innocent that involves an unnecessary expenditure of the Lord's money. All our time and all our money are the Lord's. We are the Lord's. We may innocently use both time and money to promote