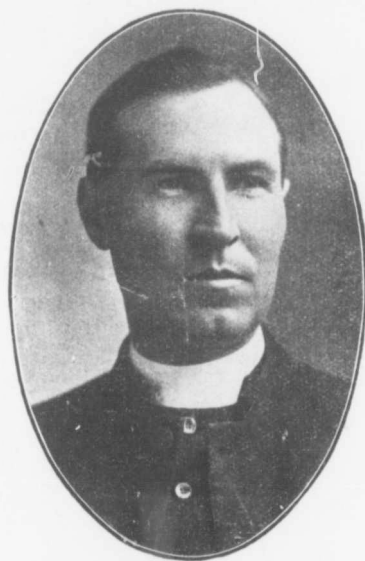


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WHY IS IT WRONG TO GAMBLE ?



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Why is it Wrong to Gamble?

An Address delivered before the Ministerial Association
of Toronto, by Ven. Archdeacon Cody, D.D.,
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MAGNITUDE OF THE EVIL.

The magnitude of the gambling evil is generally acknowledged. It is not the exclusive sport of the wealthy few, but a national ill, infecting all classes of society. It is not spontaneous, but is encouraged and organized by peripatetic "book-makers." Inspector Duncan estimates the yearly handbook business of Toronto alone at \$9,000,000. There is much thoughtless following of fashion, and there is more of deliberate propagation of the practice.

ATTITUDE OF APATHY.

The social conscience is only partially awakened to the extent of the mania and its grievous consequences. Where the disease takes hold, weakened character, misery and crime result. There are reasons for the apathetic attitude adopted towards it.

1. The general public do not realize its rapid growth and the mischief it entails.
2. Unlike drunkenness, it is not overly repulsive.
3. There is a real difficulty in knowing where to draw the line between the legitimate and the illegitimate in speculation. Allowance must be made for the element of risk in all business.
4. It is hard to suggest the right practical remedy to counteract so insidious an evil. Some think that because, like sin, it seems ineradicable from human nature, nothing at all should be done.
5. There is a lack of clear thought on the ethics of the question. What is the real element of wrong in it?

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE ?

In the Bible, the supreme repository of moral teaching, there is no specific prohibition of gambling. The reasons are not far to seek : (a) This is a vice to which the ancient Jews were not addicted. Their clear recognition of an over-ruling Providence, and their habitual thrift, promoted by having a stake in the soil, removed them from this particular temptation. Gambling was specially rife in countries where the Goddess of Fortune was worshipped, and practically the only references the Bible makes to this habit are in connection with heathen, such as the Roman soldiers around the cross.

(b) The moral principles inculcated in the Scriptures amply deal with the situation, and show that gambling is not to be approved by the healthy and educated conscience of mankind. Such words as—" The love of money is a root of every kind of evil," " Be ye kind one to another," " If any should not work neither should he eat," " Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth," " Thou shalt not covet . . . that which is thy neighbour's "—imply that to appeal to chance in order to possess one's self of an unearned gain at the cost of one's neighbour, is inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity.

WHAT IS GAMBLING ?

1. We must *distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate transactions in commerce and on the Stock Exchange*. As society grows more complex, differentiation of function becomes necessary. Special persons must effect the transference of capital from one enterprise or one individual to another. This is the proper function of the Stock Exchange. Moreover, in the effort to win control over nature for the supply of the needs of large populations, the necessary forces of human intelligence and industry must be directed by men of experience, judgment, foresight, splendid audacity. In all such commercial experiments, great risks must be run, certainties must be staked upon uncertainties, present possessions must be hazarded for future gains.

The legitimate speculations of business and experiment are distinguished from illegitimate speculation or gambling by these notes :—

(a) The former demand and develop the highest activities of men's judgment and reason ; the latter tends to eliminate them.

- (b) The former benefit the community as well as the individual by extending man's control over nature for the supply of human wants. They add something to the general store of wealth and convenience.
- (c) The legitimate enterprise is really an act of faith in the order and rationality of the universe, not an appeal to chance. It serves to guard against the element of uncertainty ; whereas the very fascination of gambling depends on the cutting out of the element of reason.

2. A bet may be defined as "*a stake upon chance for gain without labour.*" Gambling is contracting to give or receive money or goods without a just equivalent in exchange, and upon conditions that are for the most part beyond the foresight or control of the parties engaged in the transaction. Bishop Westcott has given this definition : " It is the habitual seeking of personal gain through another's loss, though with his consent, without making any adequate return for what they received or adding anything to the sum of their common wealth." To put the case in still another way, we may describe it as the determination of the ownership of property by appeal to chance, chance being equivalent to the resultant of the play of natural forces which cannot be controlled or calculated.

Just in proportion as the elements of skill and judgment are eliminated, will gambling be "pure" and "unadulterated" ; so far as the determining power of chance is qualified by skill and judgment, gambling will be "mixed."

3. Gambling is thus seen to be the perversion of certain natural and proper human instincts, and an attempt to satisfy them in a wrong way. At its root there lie these instincts :—

- (a) The *desire for money*. Money can procure much that men rightly desire—security for self and others against want, freedom from anxiety about primal needs, comfort, leisure, education, influence over others, the power of realizing worthy projects. If these ambitions are directed to unselfish and God-like ends, they are not wrong in themselves. But when hard toilers see great wealth often accumulated without effort by the appeal to chance, they may be strongly tempted to seek this short and easy road to riches.

- (b) *An instinct for conquest.* Man was commanded to subdue nature. He cannot pit himself against the forces of the world and conquer them, unless he is willing to run some risk, take some hazard, make some draft on the unknown. To all progress the spirit of adventure would seem indispensable. This spirit finds apt expression in the lines of the Marquis of Montrose, who was himself a romantic embodiment of the love of hazard :—

“ He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who does not put it to the touch
Or gain or lose it all.”

- (c) *The love of freedom.* Strict discipline, though good and often needful, may provoke a reaction, when an opportunity of free expression is presented. Men at times chafe under all rules and regulations, and forget that perfect freedom comes only through obedience to the highest law. They think interest is added to life by the unexpected, which results from having a “moral fling.”
- (d) *The love of excitement.* Much life is grey and monotonous. Mechanical toil, unrelieved by other interests, tends to deaden the emotional and imaginative life. Men rightly protest against being made machines. They crave room for some emotion and imagination. If this legitimate craving is denied healthy satisfaction, it will dispose men to gambling and intoxication as the readiest means of stimulating the emotional life.

THE WRONG OF GAMBLING.

Whatever difficulty may arise in seeking to prove that gambling or betting is wrong in itself, it is easy to show that the natural and ultimate effects are evil. That cannot be right which imperils the moral life of the individual and the well-being of society.

Gambling is wrong, because

1. *It does not take proper account of the stewardship of money.* It ignores our responsibilities for the use of the money God has entrusted to us. We may easily afford to lose our stake, but have we the right to spend our money in this way? We get nothing for it. We do no good with it. It is waste,

sheer waste. And no one, in the sight of God, ought to use money in the way of utter waste. Money is "stored-up personality"; it is the price of life. To waste it is as though one drew life blood and poured it on the ground. In man's relation to his fellows, he can't morally do "what he will with his own"; he ought so to use it as not to injure, but rather to help another. To lose money by betting or gambling is awful waste in a world full of such need as ours. In relation to God, who has given us all we hold, this misuse of money is a violation of trust. We should plainly call it so if the money lost belonged to some one else; what should we call it, when the money lost belongs to God? Is it not an *anarchical use of money*? It has been aptly said that "the man who puts his solemn responsibilities for the use of money upon the back of a horse, or into a pack of shuffled cards, is doing more to weaken the public sense of the sacredness of property and to discredit its possessors, than all the revolutionary literature of our time put together."

2. *It tends to destroy all proper conception of the rights of property.* It confuses our thought on this important subject. If the ownership of property is to be decided by an appeal to chance—the throw of dice, the shuffle of cards, the issue of a race—we can have no sound view of our own or other men's right to property of any kind. This appeal to chance is wrong for a rational being until he has used to the utmost his own judgment and reason, his highest judicial equipments.

It denies all system in the apportionment of property. It is based on an organized rejection of reason as a factor in the transference of wealth and as such strikes at the root of sound commercial dealing.

It substitutes feeble chance for strenuous effort. Money, which in ideal stands for labor and power, should pass from man to man only as the symbol of some worthy putting forth of energy and life. Except in the way of charity, money should not be given or received without something behind it that has the show of an equivalent or earning. To take money which has become yours by no employment of your manly vigour and capacity to work, and which has ceased to belong to some one else not by his willing acceptance of an equivalent, will tend to lower self-respect and to degrade manliness.

3. *It tends to degrade or kill what should be manly sport.* When a man says he does not care for a game on which no money is staked, he has ceased

to be a whole-hearted lover of sport. The sport itself, whatever it is, has ceased to be of prime interest to one who has staked a large amount on the issue. The chief consideration is no longer sport, but money-getting, and getting under such circumstances as taints the gains. It is a curious degradation of the word to apply the term "sport" not to the man who plays for play's sake, but to the man who watches the play for a money stake. True patrons of horse-racing and of all manly and exhilarating amusements should seek to redeem the honour of real sport from all that tends to lower it to a mere carnival of greed, fraud and trickery. No money issues were allowed to corrupt the athletic contests in the heroic days of Greece. Said the Persian King to Mardonius : "What sort of men have you brought us to fight against, who strive not for money but for honour!" The introduction of money proved fatal. Philip of Macedon encouraged gambling among the Greeks because "it corrupted their minds, and made them docile under his rule." Surely we are not to-day reduced to the alternative of sports with gambling or no sports at all.

4. *It threatens the well-being of society.* Men can live together in society only by suppressing certain anti-social tendencies, and cultivating certain social virtues. Gambling is essentially anti-social and makes for the disintegration of the community.

(a) It seeks personal *gain through another's loss* ; profit from another's misery. It takes a man's money without giving him an adequate return. "Betting and gambling stand in exactly the same relation to stealing as duelling does to murder. In both cases, the consent of the victim and the chance of being the successful offender do not alter the moral character of the act." Herbert Spencer, in his "Study of Sociology" makes these pertinent remarks : "Gambling is a kind of action by which pleasure is obtained at the cost of the pain of another. The normal attainment of gratification, or of the money which purchases gratification, implies, first, that there has been put forth equivalent effort of a kind which has in some way furthered the general good, and, secondly, that those from whom the money is received got directly or indirectly equivalent satisfaction. But in gambling the opposite happens. The benefit received does not imply effort put forth, and the happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser. It, therefore sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character and conduct."

(b) *It violates, in emphasizing selfishness, the law of brotherly love.* The bet is made on the assumption that the one who bets knows more than his partner to the wager, or that his opinion is the better. If he really does know more, is it not rather a mean act to take advantage of the more ignorant man with a view to making money out of his ignorance,—no equivalent being given? But, it may be said, "The other man goes in with his eyes open; he is willing; he takes his chances." What chances—but the certainty of losing, if the other man really knows more? This, when we come to think of it, is not manly, but mean. It is not a friendly or a noble attitude to take to your friend in your hours of common recreation. It is anti-social. It must breed mutual distrust and unmercifulness, as each man looks selfishly to his own gain.

If the man who bets really does not know more than the other man what then? Whether he really knows or does not know, he thinks he knows. As a matter of fact, very few bet when they know they will lose. If they do, they do wrong; they have no moral right to spend their money in that way.

In all cases there is a chance to win, and a man bets on the strength of that chance. It is this concentration of thought on an uncertainty which debilitates and demoralizes. The hope to win by chance or by secret knowledge increases selfishness, stimulates covetousness and weakens the ties of brotherliness. The effect of gambling on individual character is to render a man unfit for social service. Interest which should be given to work and service is selfishly absorbed.

(c) *It adds nothing to the common well-being.* It is not socially useful. It produces no wealth.

(d) *It tends to discourage the spirit of industry.* It destroys reverence for sober, hard, persevering labour. It promises profit without effort, and tempts people to try what seems an easy and speedy way to wealth. To get a living without working for it is a science greatly coveted by some. No vice strikes a more deadly blow at the root principle of all worthy and strenuous work.

(e) *It is very frequently accompanied after a certain point by lying, deception, bribery and various forms of dishonesty.* There is an overmastering temptation to try to influence the issue on which the bet is made.

(f) *It ranks with drunkenness as a chief cause of crime.* In some cases, it is the direct cause of cheating, selling races and matches, and similar dishonest proceedings. In other cases it is an indirect cause in leading to embezzlement, forgery, debt, bankruptcy, suicide. Personal observation and the testimony of Crown officials abundantly verify this statement.

The really anti-social character of gambling becomes evident from the fact that if the whole fraternity of those occupied in promoting its manifold forms were compelled suddenly to desist, the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical wealth of the world would not be diminished ; if they were transferred to a productive field of labour, that wealth would be increased. True sport would flourish once more, and an undoubted fountain of much vice and crime would be sealed up. This must mean that the *practice is parasitic*. It lives on the labour of others, and imperils the life of society. Those who are addicted to it are among the least honoured and least efficient classes of society. In our study of "futures" it is well to remember the future esteem in which society will hold those who have thoroughly acquired this habit.

5. *It is harmful to the moral life of the individual.* The tendency of gambling is to impair the foundation of good character. This is not always obvious at the outset. Counteracting elements may stay the process. Gambling is not always "pure" and "unmixed." But the natural and logical tendency is to exercise a deteriorating influence on character.

(a) In "pure" gambling, a man deliberately lays aside the use of those faculties which mark personality—conscience, reason, skill, judgment, intelligence, will—and reduces himself to a being who has only passions and emotions. It is this rejection of reason and this surrender to forces outside one's control that produce the emotional excitement and intellectual extravagances of the gambling mania. A man no longer has to *think* ; he only *feels*. He rises to heights of hope ; anon he plunges into the depths of despair. Greed and desire grow by gain, and torture by loss. Fear and expectation strain the soul to the breaking point ; then in a moment at the crisis they yield to a rapture which intoxicates or to a despair which benumbs. There is no tedious working up to a crisis of emotion ; the gambler has his crisis every minute. This abnormal enlargement and stimulation of the lower passions and emotions must tend literally to kill out the finer and nobler sides of human nature.

(b) Is it putting it too strongly to say, that the tendency of this vice is to *dehumanize* ? If each man stands in selfish isolation, indifferent to the loss of others, inflamed by excitement, almost delirious with fear and mad with greed, he cannot help becoming less human. The freshness and spontaneity of life depart ; suspicion is in the air he breathes. Sympathy is seared. The man grows mean, callous, cruel, wolfish. Happily for society this goal of character is not reached by all who gamble ; but whether we are conscious of it or not, that is the direction in which the habit turns our faces.

(c) *It is somewhat like the habit of taking drugs and stimulants.* In each case there is momentary pleasure due to the exaltation of the emotional life, while the higher faculties are depressed ; there is a reaction which demands a repeated indulgence ; there is peril to the life by the creation of a desire which rapidly becomes a craving ; there is a terrible fascination which paralyzes the will. Gambling creates an insatiable desire to go back to it again. In many natures it arouses a passion as uncontrollable by reason and morality as any physical craving.

(d) The possibility of such easy gain *quickens the latent instinct of avarice*, which is one of the most insidiously disintegrating influences in human society, inciting as it does to complete self-absorption and entire loss of sympathy with the material interests of one's fellows. The money element plays a larger part in this practice than we are at first willing to admit. It is often said " I do not bet for money. I take my chances of losing. That shows that the money stake is not the chief thing." There is something of force in this ; but why do men usually bet for money ? Why not bet for buttons ? If it is said " I bet for the interest and excitement ; the money is only incidental " ; it is fair to ask, " What makes it interesting and exciting ? " Is it not largely because men stand to win or lose *money* ? Do they not refrain from betting, if they think they will lose ? If the chances are unfavourable, do they not demand odds ? Do they not feel disposed to bet freely, when they think they will win ? It rather looks as if the money element were in it, and very much in it. In all seriousness one may ask—How much betting would there be on a race or a match or a game, if all the proceeds had to be devoted to hospitals or public charities ?

(e) *Gambling enamours a man of the idea of getting something for nothing*, an idea which lies at the root of many unrighteous and dishonourable deeds

among men. This is a debilitating idea, which will, if indulged in, unmake any man. A fair equivalent is necessary in all solid commercial transactions. The very craving to take unearned gains has in itself something of the immoral ; such gains necessarily imply an injury to some other persons, known or unknown. This "something for nothing" idea distracts a man's attention from his business, wastes his time, creates an unhealthy restlessness which is fatal to honest work for a fair reward, intoxicates his mental life, and spoils the reliability of his judgment.

Therefore, we conclude that there must be an element of ethical wrong in gambling, because of its effects on the individual and on society.

CHARLES KINGSLEY ON GAMBLING.

Charles Kingsley, apostle of muscular Christianity, was a true sportsman, if ever there was one. No one has brought a stronger indictment against gambling than he in a famous letter written to his son. He says : " You said you had put into some lottery for the Derby and had hedged to make it safe. Now all this is bad, bad, nothing but bad. Of all habits, gambling is the one I hate most, and have avoided most. Of all habits it grows most on eager minds. Success and loss alike make it grow. Of all habits, however much civilized man may give way to it, it is one of the most intrinsically savage ; it is unchivalrous and un-Christian. It gains money by the lowest means, for it takes money out of your neighbour's pocket without giving him anything in return. It tempts you to use what you fancy your superior knowledge of a horse's merits—or anything else—to your neighbour's harm. If you know better than your neighbour, you are bound to give him your advice. Instead you conceal your knowledge to win from his ignorance. Hence come all sorts of concealments, dogdes, deceits. Recollect always that the stock argument is worthless : ' My friend would win from me if he could ; therefore I have an equal right to win from him.' Nonsense ; the same argument would prove that I have a right to maim or kill a man, if only I give him leave to maim or kill me, if he can and will I have seen many a good fellow ruined by finding himself one day short of money and trying to get a little by play or betting—and then the Lord have mercy on his simple soul, for simple it will not remain long. Betting is the way of the world. So are all the seven deadly sins under certain rules and pretty names ; but to the devil they lead if indulged in, in spite of the wise world and its ways."

WHAT CAN WE DO TO STAY THE EVIL ?

If it is an evil, something should be done to deal with it. No matter how deep seated, or ancient, or widespread sin is, we do not yield dominion to it, because we cannot wholly eradicate it. The world would be a sorry place, if evils were allowed to flourish unmolested simply because we may not yet know how best to overcome them, and may not thoroughly succeed in our effort. In face of the gambling problem we can take certain measures.

1. We can *re-state the moral fundamentals involved* :

(a) The *duty of labour*, as morally superior to idleness, or the pursuit of pleasure as an end in itself, or the pernicious principle of " something for nothing."

(b) The *duty of using talents* of time and money for the wellbeing of all.

2. We can *point out the folly of gambling*. Mr. W. A. Fraser, in an article on " Fool's Money " in the *Saturday Evening Post*, describes gambling as " the acme of human foolishness. There is no known rule or method, crooked or straight, that will prevail against the great percentage of chance, and so men lose and plunge, and lose again in the hopeless pursuit of easy wealth." Someone has bluntly put the case in this way : " Betting with bookmakers is the hall mark of an ignorant greenhorn." The chances are against the gambler, and his knowledge of the real conditions of the game or race is practically *nil*. In this world of alleged sport, the shrewd and experienced man of business will often throw aside all consideration of rational conditions and relevant evidence, and become an easy mark for the smooth-tongued tipster ; he will abandon his reasoning faculties and stake his money on horses he never saw, or if he did see them, whose merits he could not distinguish, and do it all in reliance on some superstitious " run of luck " or on the advice of one of the stable boys, or on " the sure thing " confided to him by a bookmaker's agent. This also is vanity. This also is folly. It is on the folly of those who bet that the bookmaker lives, and lives uncommonly well. A few men make and keep money won in this way ; but the many lose and lose again. To come out even is almost the best that can be hoped for. Perhaps the real esteem in which the sober-minded community holds the practice of gambling is evidenced when a man loses. Banks and friends are not forward to advance money to help him over his difficulty. He is usually pronounced a fool, and gets little practical sympathy. " To fancy," writes Dr. Marcus Dods, " that we shall be exceptions

and win where others have lost, that we shall be among the solitary lucky ones, and not among the thousand unlucky, is a folly to which we are all liable, but it is none the less a folly."

3. *We can be careful as to our personal example*, and cast our influence on the side of safety. It is well to be scrupulous in avoiding the beginnings and smaller applications of the practice. For it is not the distance we go, but the direction in which we move that morally counts for most. A Christian must always consider the welfare of "the brother for whom Christ died." When any practice, even if not wrong in itself, has in the course of time become a chief cause of wrong doing, a snare to innumerable lives, and a disintegrating influence in the body politic, a Christian should avoid the very beginning of it.

4. *We can help to form a sound public opinion* on the subject.

Fifty years have produced a change for the better in the general view of drunkenness. Why should not a process of ethical education bring about a similar change in the attitude towards gambling? We must aim at securing a higher sense of self-respect, and a deeper regard for the community of interests which will cause a man to treat his fellow as one not to be injured but to be helped.

5. *We can secure a measure of restrictive and regulative legislation.*

Although we cannot make men good by Act of Parliament, we can remove many temptations and give a better opportunity to men to be good. Legislation may crystallize sound public opinion and make it more difficult to harm one's self or injure the community. Legislation may be made more definite and the enforcement of law proportionately easier. The publication of betting news, the gambling on race tracks, the widespread institution of the handbook, are proper subjects for legislative action.

6. *We can try to secure a legitimate and rightful satisfaction for those instincts which lie at the basis of gambling.*

Negative and prohibitive reforms are only half-way measures. The best way to displace an evil is to instal a good in its place. Every effort at healthy social reform, every rational movement to make life less monotonous for those who toil, every success in bringing money into closer connection with labour and social utility, every lesson learned that wealth and leisure are called to serve society and that idleness is a disgraceful sin, every improvement in the conditions of employment and in wages, which may give

scope for the development of the higher sides of life, every absorption of individuals in a worthy cause—will tend to diminish the spirit of gambling.

7. *We can seek to deepen the moral and spiritual life of the nation.*

The root of all vices is the selfish heart. Restraint without moral conversion will be ineffective ; for selfishness will express itself in other directions. The spirit of self sacrifice incarnate in our Lord must enter our hearts to expel the wrong self-love and to teach us the highest joy. If, as Kingsley says, gambling is both unchivalrous and unchristian, we can only exorcise it by the knowledge and practice of the true chivalry, and the true Christianity unto which our Master has redeemed us.

