

"THE CASE FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE"

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In a ministry which now extends to more than a third of a century, this writer cannot recall having read anything which has so shocked and saddened him as an article in a recent bulletin widely circulated in the brotherhood (and already appearing in reprints), bearing the title, "The Case For Total Abstinence."

The title is deceptive; far from being a "case" for "total abstinence," it is a pitiful apology for social drinking; and the premises on which the "case" is made to rest are nothing more than the threadbare arguments drinkers have deduced to justify their indulgence in intoxicating liquors from the beginning.

The article begins,

"Christ's disciple does not abstain from alcoholic beverages because of scriptural injunction. Nowhere does the Bible say that it is morally wrong to drink an alcoholic beverage. It does teach that it is a sin to drink to excess or to become intoxicated." The implication is that any act, forbidden to the Christian, must be specifically enjoined by a "scriptural injunction." That is, for any act to be regarded as wrong, there must be a positive prohibition eliminating it from the area of permissive activity. The writer then adroitly notes that, "Nowhere does the Bible say that it is morally wrong to drink an alcoholic beverage"; hence drinking intoxicating beverages is within the area of permissive activity. Such is the conclusion he wishes to be drawn from the "premises" advanced. Suspending, for the moment, an examination of his mode of reasoning, let us make precisely the same application he makes to other areas of activity involving human conduct. Ponder this paraphrase:

Christ's disciple does not abstain from the addiction of opium because of scriptural injunction. Nowhere does the Bible say that it is morally wrong to be addicted to opium. It does teach that it is wrong to use opium to excess....

Because, "nowhere does the Bible say" it is morally wrong to use opium, shall we thence infer that it is therefore permissible to be moderately addicted to this drug? (The author of the article must not, at this point, shift ground with the allegation that opium has a legitimate use medicinally; so also does alcohol. He seeks to justify the use of intoxicating liquor socially and for beverage purposes. On what ground then, can he object to the use of opiates for "pleasure???")

Note another paraphrase,

Christ's disciple does not abstain from gambling because of scriptural injunction. Nowhere does the Bible say that it is morally wrong to gamble. It is a sin to gamble to excess...

Catholic morality makes ample provision for its devotees to drink and to gamble, socially and in moderation. On the assumption that an act, to be morally wrong, must be specifically enjoined on what basis would our brother, whose article we review, object? But again,

Christ's disciples does does not abstain from LSD because of scriptural injunction.

Nowhere does the Bible say that it is morally wrong to use LSD. It is a sin to use LSD in excess...

LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), is a drug which when taken internally, induces weird, mental impressions and its use is widespread, so the papers report, on college campuses today. The Bible "nowhere" says its use is "morally wrong." May we then, on these premises, assume that it is permissible for Christians to indulge therein?

The answer to this is obvious: The evils resulting from the use of drugs and from participation in gambling forbid Christian participation. Indeed so. As deathly and destructive to moral fibre ~~are~~ are gambling and dope addiction, a hundred people in this land, suffer destruction from drinking liquor, as a beverage, to one person who destroys himself by gambling and through the use of drugs. We are bidden to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Thess.5:22); how then, could a Christian possibly participate in a practice, permissibly, which today accounts for more than five million alcoholics in this land? Not one of these pitiful people, who grovel in the most deject misery at the feet of their alcoholic monster, intended to become alcoholics. Each one began by taking just one social drink. For them, the first drink was the fatal one. ONE SOCIAL DRINK RESULTED IN THEIR DESTRUCTION. SOMEBODY ENCOURAGED THEM TO TAKE IT. We shudder to think of that unnumbered host which will, because of this encouragement from a "gospel" preacher, follow the same path to destruction. We grieve because countless others, already addicted to drink, will find support in his words for a practice they might otherwise have been prompted to terminate. His words fail us as we wonder the cost in souls of precious boys and girls who, by this arti-