

Raffles Cards Dances and Divorce



by

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THE CASE IN FAVOUR OF RAFFLES CARDS DANCES

THE fourteen years of my ministry have been, with one brief exception, spent in districts where Church pews are more empty than filled, and financial problems, at times, so heavy and troublesome as to affect seriously the spiritual life of the people. Like Job, I have not been without my advisers who believed the responsibility of flourishing Church life depended solely upon the minister; and others who thought matters would right themselves if more emphasis was placed on the social life of the Church. I want to discuss the position from both sides, and present first the views of one who believes cards, dancing and raffles to be things which promote successful Church life; you are, doubtless, very familiar with the argument; secondly, to present the Christian objections.

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Cards.—Whatever the ideal of the Christian Church may be, you cannot expect its members and adherents to give up the favourite pastime of "a game of cards." Why not, then, capture this interest for God and divert the purely secular to the social department of the Church? It is popular and, if free from gambling, is quite harmless. Whether in the homes of one another, or in the Parish Hall, you are providing entertainment which has possibilities of winning the players' patronage of Sunday worship. If, for the cause, supper is provided, a charge of one shilling could be made for the evening. Perhaps, and note this, to keep up the interest, small prizes could be given to the winners, and the Church gets all the money. Social needs are thus provided for, the Church accounts are more favourable, people begin to worship at Church, and everybody is pleased.

Dancing.—But we must go one step further—people like dancing. Of course, no Church could countenance "jitterbugging." Still, there are the old-fashioned and popular modern dances which delight old and young alike. If you cannot, as a Church, provide what they get elsewhere they will gradually leave. What harm is there in a properly conducted dance, or even in the Annual Church Ball, always under the minister's supervision, where no drink is allowed, and admission is by invitation only? Drunkenness and immorality would be absent, and parishioners would grow up in the atmosphere of proper dancing and shun

dances of another kind. Church-going men and women would be eased in mind were they to know their sons and daughters were in right company. What can be legitimately raised as an objection to Church dancing when the Bible relates that David danced before the Ark of God, and the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son was offended with the sound of musick and dancing in his father's home? Financially, it would be a huge success, and those whom you could not expect to look favourably on the Church may become interested and, perhaps, attend its services. To get people into the Church, and, thereby, gain their practical support, is the end in view, and harmless activities are the bait and of little consequence when immortal souls are at stake.

Raffling.—It is regrettable that people always want something for their money; they do not give straight out to any cause. Fortunately this is far from true of many. The Church, then, in its effort to keep abreast of the times, cannot afford to ignore facts. Gambling seems to be a part of the average individual's make-up. Of course, it would be wrong for the Church to associate with racing, sweep-stakes and such like, but the raffling of some article made by a parishioner will create interest and bring in a "tidy sum" for the Church. Once again, as gambling is here to stay, let the Church use this interest and divert it to profitable use. To sum it up, what harm is there in such methods? The Church, if it is to keep its people and pay its debts, must fall in with the times and please the rank and file.

THE CHRISTIAN OBJECTIONS

At first sight, a broad view of the situation promises a live, affluent Church. Holy Scripture, by which our determinations in religious matters are decided, forbids such methods. For that which hopes to benefit ultimately by all these aforementioned suggestions is the Christian Church which, in reality, is that great company of believers baptised into the Name of the Trinity. The Head over all things to the Church is Jesus Christ, and, it is only as the Church, the Kingdom of God on earth, represents His Will that it can justify its existence and hope to enjoy ultimately the eternal presence of God in Heaven. It has been taught to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." When it fails to fulfil God's purpose it ceases to be the Church, although outwardly it may masquerade as such to the world. The Holy Spirit of God can be withdrawn from the Church which has lost its "birthright," witness the threat to the Laodicean Church. In the Acts of the Apostles a true picture of the Christian Church is given. I do not find suggestions of such methods as dancing and raffles or anything corresponding to cards used "to bring in daily such as should be saved," nor to keep their interest and meet the Church's financial need. Rather "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" Nor do we read that the Anglican clergymen Wesley and others resorted to such harmless means as cards, dancing and raffles to win the numbers. There have been opportunists in religion as in other avenues of life, but only where the

pure Gospel was preached did the results of numbers won continue. In the light of Scripture, cards of any description as a means of raising money or keeping the parishioners socially entertained are taboo. It is said these were invented to amuse an insane French monarch, but so steeped in wickedness have they become, even to the extent of murder, that they must be left alone. Spurgeon said, "Of two evils choose neither." The Church teaches the sin of placing temptation in another's way, and, although cards may be learned to perfection quite apart from the Church, the Church has no right to introduce anyone to something that may lead to disastrous results.

Evangelist Wilbur Chapman vouches for the TRUTH of this incident. "A tramp, an escaped convict, entered his former childhood's first and only church home. Before leaving, he stood up and testified as follows:

'My mother and father used to sit in this pew. It is the first church I ever attended. My father was an officer in this church. Seven boys used to sit in this pew in the Sunday School class. We had a great love and respect for our Sunday School teacher. Saturday afternoon she invited us to her home, entertaining with music, eatables and a look over the lesson. After a while she was anxious to please us and hold us, and she taught us the names of cards. None had ever used cards. We became enthusiastic over it, learning different games. After a while we would not give so much time to the lesson, but she let us have more time to playing cards, and would show us some more tricks. After a while we were off in the cotton gins playing cards and not going to her home. Later we failed to go to Sunday School. Cards, cigarettes, after a while a drink and gambling. We all at different times left our homes. Two of those boys have been hung, three are in State's prison for life, one a

vagabond like myself. No one knows where he is, and if the authorities knew I was here I would be arrested and put behind bars. All I wish is, that that teacher had never taught us how to play cards.'

As he stood there broken-hearted, a lady at the right and near the pulpit, dressed in mourning, arose, went to where the man was, fell on the floor with a scream and said, 'My God! I am the Sunday School teacher that did it!' She fainted, and we did not know but that she was dead. She revived. The woman was not seen any more in the meeting and the man never seen since."

What people may do in their own homes cannot be prevented, but when those same persons group themselves on a particular occasion as some organisation of a body, religious or secular, they ought to represent the tenets of that society. What as a Christian may be done may, because of circumstances, become inexpedient—so it is better left alone. The Church is in the world, but not necessarily of the world; the Church must lead the way, not be overwhelmed by worldly ways until its identity becomes unrecognised. If the Church must have fellowship, have people forgotten the Communion or Fellowship of Saints which we affirm every Sunday in the Apostles' Creed? This was established by God because He knew man's real needs could be adequately satisfied in this regard. To help the Church financially is the least of considerations in the mind of one playing an "innocent" game of cards under the auspices of the Church. He goes there primarily to have good fun, the never-ending search after more pleasure—the worldly antidote to cares and circumstances of routine life. If the Church gives its people wrong training those impressions will be difficult to eradicate.

What is true of cards is really the objection to dancing connected with the Church. The function of the Church is to care for the spiri-

tual needs of the people; it has no real time to entertain. The minister was not ordained to be an entertainer. Would he be able to keep up the standard and expensive equipment needed to compete with non-Church organisations? Would not his "shows" become rather dull without the usual suggestive jokes and acts seen on theatre platforms and at times sent over the air? And dancing under the auspices of the Church would not appeal to the outsider whom, if the Church is to obey its Master's wish, must be brought in. Are there not plenty of local dances more acceptable because of drink than a dry place of entertainment such as the Church provides? Who would draw the line between those who are acceptable and those who are objectionable among the parishioners? Wouldn't some difficulties arise? No, dancing, well-conducted or otherwise, under the auspices of the Church is not to be considered for, in the world outside, it is closely associated with the evils of immorality and drunkenness. Some believe that anything is all right provided that the place where it is conducted is of good report. The sanctity of a parish hall roof or of any other roof cannot blot out the wrong of gaining the Church's ends through dancing. Perhaps it is a coincidence that where dancing has been allowed by one minister whose successor definitely forbids it, the young people in the latter's ministry somehow begin to drift away. I believe this is proof they have not been won for Christ by the dancing, for the dancing would seem to be the bond that held them and not the love of Jesus Christ.

Raffling is only a form of gambling. Christianity and gambling are opposites. The latter believes that God has delegated to another His power to control the Universe, or that He has power only in so far as evil forces in the Universe do not clash and thwart His good inten-

tions. Chance, Fate, Luck, are popular names associated with this unchristian belief in God. This is well illustrated in gambling. It can so separate one from God that even the issues of eternity, of Heaven and Hell are dismissed as myths. It has its effect in marriage which is often described as a "gamble."

In place of the so-called myths comes a hard, selfish, material outlook on life. The desire to make the most whilst life lasts is the predominating thought. Is it any wonder that men, women and children must suffer in this pursuit of ungodly ends? The wish "to get," not "to give," is unChrist-like, and certainly not honest. In a raffle, sweep, lottery, gamble—call it what you like—the desire is to get something out of all proportion to the small sum invested, always with the knowledge that no human work has been done by the investor, and that many must lose to provide the winnings of a few. Or, in other words, in an honest trade both buyer and seller GAIN. In a game of chance, one GAINS what another has LOST. God speaks of square dealing, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Again He says, "Work with your hands (and even then not to hoard up, but) that ye may have to GIVE to him that needeth." That a percentage of the "takings" goes to help taxation, hospitals, blinded soldiers or orphan children, eases the conscience of those Christians who sit on the fence. Why, if they are so much moved with distress at the plight of the needy, do they not give to the cause the price of the raffle, sweep, lottery, etc.? No, this would be giving something for nothing, and it wouldn't appeal to them. By a small investment they hope to gain security for life. Gambling has been proved the motive for stealing and murder in many instances, and, so, whether it is in a mild form such as a Church raffle or something involving tre-

mendous sums of money does not matter. It is just as wrong to steal a penny as it is to steal a million pounds. The effects, of course, in the second case must be greater than the first, but stealing is sin, and there are 10 degrees of sin. Raffling by a well-intentioned old lady or young child amounts to the same thing. During the war I was asked, unsuccessfully one evening about 8.30 o'clock at the door, to buy a ticket in a raffle—the prize being two bottles of wine. Little girls pedalled the raffle tickets, and the profits went to the Australian Comforts Fund. I have heard it said that casting of lots was a Biblical practice. I know that Nebuchadnezzar, the heathen King of Babylon, cast lots for a propitious day on which to attack Jerusalem; also that Matthias was chosen by lot to fill the place of Judas Iscariot, who was dead. But no Christian could offer Nebuchadnezzar's practice as an argument for Church raffling or public lotteries; neither has Peter's casting of lots to choose an apostle any connection with the selling and drawing of raffle tickets for some tea cosy or doll at a Church bazaar. From time to time much dishonesty has been exposed in the conduct of Art Unions. Here again the "apparently harmless" thing is associated with evil. I think it is all best disassociated from Church.

I believe that where some people feel that the three things I have discussed are still necessary and allowable from a Christian point of view, such persons have missed the point of Christian teaching and practice. A converted person gladly accepts the Church for what it can provide for him spiritually. Cards, raffles and dances are not honestly approved by those who use them in the Church, for, in their more sane moments, they must question why a sacred body is mixed up with them at all. They are as out of place in Church social and financial life as the proverbial bull in a

china shop. The Christian, recognising it is his privilege and need to attend Church regularly, as well as providing that silent witness for the community in so doing, looks upon what he possesses as not his solely, but that which has been entrusted to him by God. He makes his offering for the work of the Church at home and abroad. There doesn't appear to be any difficulty, and he does not ask to be entertained. All he expects of the Church is to minister to his spiritual needs faithfully. Get the heart of the individual thinking from God's point of view and Church difficulties will disappear. But all this involves contacts, and this the minister cannot hope to achieve alone. He must have the co-operation of the people who will work and witness, not to help make successful alone the particular stay of some ordained man in their midst, but to strengthen and extend the Church of God on earth.

Leave it to the parson, and soon the Church will die;

Leave it to the womenfolk—the young will pass it by.

For the Church is all that lifts us from the coarse and selfish mob,

And the Church that is to prosper needs a layman on the job.

For a layman has his business, and a layman has his joys,

But he also has the training of his little girls and boys;

And I wonder how he'd like it if there were no Churches here

And he had to raise his children in a godless atmosphere!

It's the Church's special function to uphold the finer things,

To teach the way of living from which all that's noble springs;

But the parson cannot do it, single-handed and alone,

For the laymen of the country are the Church's corner-stone.

When you see a Church that's empty, tho', the doors are open wide,

It's not the Church that's dying—it's the laymen who have died;

For it's not by song or sermon that the Church's work is done—

It's the laymen of the country, who for God must carry on.

The Anglican Synod of the Sydney Diocese has repeatedly placed on record its disapproval of the methods I have mentioned above, and I quote a few extracts:

1931.—“That this Synod, recognising that the self-sacrificing spirit of the Cross is the Divine ideal of giving to God's work, strongly recommends to all Church people the method of direct giving for Church objects, condemns all games of chance for any purposes, and also strongly deprecates the organisation of dances and card parties for the support of God's work.”

1932.—“This Synod records its strong condemnation of any use of gambling devices to raise funds for Church or public purposes . . .”

1933.—“This Synod repeats and now desires to strongly emphasise its opposition to gambling, whether it be by raffles, betting and other forms, as being wrong in principle and immoral.”

The Synod, as you know, is made up of Clergymen and two laymen Communicant members of each parochial Church, the laymen being elected by the parishioners.

I earnestly commend this article to you for your prayerful consideration and support, realising that the subject has not been exhaustive; yet, what has been said is surely a strong argument for non-participation in these questionable practices by the Church. If any reader agrees with what I have stated from

the Christian point of view, but doubts if it can work in a parish, I hasten to assure him that it can be accomplished by the grace of God.

DIVORCE

By the kind permission of the Mothers' Union, Sydney, I have thought fit to include the following article because it has not by any means had the publicity it deserves. Its insertion may help others to reconsider the Church's attitude against remarriage of divorced people whose partner is still living; too often the Church is criticised without justification.

WHY IS A STRICT MARRIAGE LAW NECESSARY TO THE NATION?

Why is Divorce opposed by the Church?

- (a) It is against the teaching of Christ. St. Matt. 19:4-9; St. Mark 10:2-13; St. Luke 16:18.
- (b) It sets happiness rather than duty and honour as the ideal in life.
- (c) It means non-forgiveness—a fatal thing in life.

Why should Christ's teaching be followed by the Nation?

- (a) Because we are a Christian nation and modern civilisation is based, consciously or unconsciously, on Christ's teaching on moral and domestic matters.
- (b) Because the Christian law of marriage is for the ultimate good of all humanity; for it is the only law which leaves the way open for the restoration of the broken married life. It is the only law which will urge married people to the fullest effort, and so bring out the best in them. It is the only law which

makes the home permanent for children and which recognises their right to such a home.

Is not indissoluble marriage against nature?

- (a) No. Nature demands the ideal of a lifelong bond—for the full maturity of marital love and understanding, which needs a lifetime for full development in its various phases;
- (b) For the full maturity of the family relationship, which is not completed when the children grow up.

Would not easier divorce be better for the Nation?

No, as a strong family life is the rock on which a wholesome and strong social structure is built. The family is the unit of the nation on which all else ultimately depends. To quote from historians: "Every healthy society in its best time has endeavoured to treat marriage as indissoluble." Again, "The transformation of a union for life into a partnership during good conduct cannot fail to be fraught with eventful consequences," and "What we have to look forward to is a state of things in which marriage will be contracted without reflection and broken without scruple."

President Roosevelt said: "Easy divorce is a bane to any nation. It is a curse to society and a menace to the home, an incitement to married unhappiness; an evil thing for men and still more hideously evil for women."

Why should a modern woman be bound by old-fashioned marriage laws?

Far from being a hardship, it is woman's best security. Women lose their attractions sooner than men, and if it is made easy for a man to change his life's partner, many a middle-aged woman will find her husband and

home gone from her for inadequate cause. Opportunity makes the thief—it also makes the home-wrecker.

Marriage is just a contract, so why should we not be able to break it?

Marriage is something more than a contract; it is a relationship of the most intimate and far-reaching kind. It is definitely a public act and undertaken with most solemn vows of lifelong partnership involving social obligations. We cannot get rid of our other relations. Our husband or wife is the only relation we choose for ourselves, so the responsibility is ours and we should not complain!

Is it not better for the children to permit easier divorce?

No, it means broken homes and divided loyalties, and deprives them of their right to father, mother and home. Children are the link which holds together what might be a divided couple.

Was not divorce easier years ago?

There was no divorce in England earlier than 1857. The Act was passed to meet what were believed to be a few special cases of hardship. It opened a floodgate by lowering a standard and suggesting a possibility. In 1871, 166 divorces took place; in 1933, 3,934.

In the Australian Commonwealth in 1901, 378 divorces took place; in 1921, 1,382; in 1943, 4,641; and the increase in divorce during the war years is well known.

Would it not raise the standard of morality?

Two wrongs do not make a right. Any lowering of the sanctity of marriage leads to a lower moral standard all round. Ireland, with no divorce law, has the smallest number of illegitimate births,

Is it not cruel to expect a woman to live with a brute?

No one compels her to do so. Separation is absolutely necessary sometimes.

Does not that lead to immorality?

Why should it any more than to suggest that unmarried people are immoral?

What about hard cases?

Hard cases there undoubtedly are, pitiful indeed sometimes; but easier divorce would create more hard cases, as there would be the temptation to magnify difficulties, instead of trying to overcome them. Permanence in marriage makes for success.

Happiness is what matters for us all and would not people be happier with an easy divorce law?

No, if persons are to get a divorce for lunacy, drink, incompatibility, etc., is a man to have the right to divorce his wife because she loses her beauty, or can a woman divorce her husband because he loses his fortune? Are heart disease, consumption, and various crippling diseases to become causes for divorce also? **When one takes up a cause it is better to look at the end rather than the beginning, and the slippery slope of easy divorce will lead to a morass of evil and sorrow. "For better, for worse, till death do us part," is a finer, healthier and, in the long run, happier road for married couples to tread, with its give-and-take and mutual help over the rough places on the road.**

(Copies of this booklet may be had on application to the writer).