

The Christian View of Gambling

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Dayrapt

I have been asked to speak to the listeners-in of 2CH on "The Christian View of Gambling". Strictly speaking I was asked to say something about the Gambling Evil. But I prefer the former title for two reasons:- (1) the title "The Gambling Evil" rather begs the question & (2) the more general title covers too wide a scope for a half-hour talk to any purpose. I prefer the title "The Christian View of Gambling" is positive & definite and in no way begs the question. It also deals with the subject in a practical way for it really deals with the question:- "Is gambling consistent with Christian ideals & principles?" Has Christianity any bearing upon the widespread practice of gambling which has very many forms betting, lotteries, sweepstakes, raffles, Art Unions (save the mark!) & the many forms of gaming! The gambling instinct we are told is deeply rooted in human nature, and we must admit that there is ample evidence for that statement. The pre-historic cave-dweller indulged in gambling, for objects used as dice have been found ~~among~~ among the remains he has left. There is abundant allusion to gambling in Greek & Roman literature and Tacitus says of the Germans who were the wild ancestors of the English that they would even gamble away their personal liberty. The gambling habit is as wide as humanity. Games of chance are played by peoples in every stage of civilisation.

We are concerned just now, however, with our own people in Australia, and we can easily see, if we pay attention to the facts, what a hold the gambling habit has upon them. The newspapers tell the tale. The biggest & most reputable of the daily papers find it expedient to publish columns of betting news every day. It is asserted, & there is truth in the assertion, that they could not maintain their circulation unless

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They published such news. The evening papers issue special editions for this purpose & there are papers that publish nothing else. Australia is admittedly overstocked with racecourses & vast crowds flock to them. There are vast numbers also who never see a horse race ~~and~~ but indulge in the betting that goes on in connection with the multitude of race-meetings. If betting ceased horse-racing would cease. It is the betting that really keeps it going. But horse-racing is not the only 'sport' that gives occasion for betting and gambling. Boxing & football are responsible for a good deal. There are also the many games of chance, sweeps, lotteries, raffles & so forth. When we consider these facts & the number of people they involve, we are faced with a situation that calls for serious attention on the part of those who have the welfare of the community at heart. Even the ordinary man of the world who refuses to admit that gambling is wrong in principle, has been heard to acknowledge that there is far too much gambling going on. He can see that all this gambling means a huge amount of wasteful spending of money which is bad for business, & that the scale on which gambling goes on has a ~~bad~~ effect on the general level of character. He is ready to see all this when his attention is called to it but familiarity with the things I have described has blunted his perception of the real seriousness of the situation.

The sincere Christian who is convinced that gambling is wrong in principle can more clearly appreciate its evil effects on the welfare of the community, but even he is apt to weaken his attitude of opposition & protest, in the face of the difficulty of making his influence effective in the right direction. Far too many Christians have let their conscience go to sleep on this question. They

feel themselves but a voice crying in the wilderness & so they
 are silent when they ought to be loudly vocal. It is simply
 futile to admit the existence of the evil & then say no more
 about it. The menace of the gambling evil can be overcome
 only by the awakening of the public conscience and that
 can be done only when the real Christians of the community
 stir up their own conscience & make it persistently vocal. They
 have a strong case & they should state it strongly. It is highly
 significant that the Royal Commission which sat recently in
 Great Britain gave a decided opinion against ^{legalising} ~~employing~~ gambling
 devices for revenue or charitable purposes because they felt
 it would be contrary to public opinion. It was public opinion
 that caused State Lotteries to cease in England a hundred
 years ago, & apparently that public opinion is active still.
 There were other considerations, economic & moral, which
 confirmed this decision, but the main factor was that public
 opinion was against the use of such means for raising funds for
 public or charitable purposes.

That the public ^{conscience} ~~opinion~~ can be stirred is shown by the
 history ^{of the movement} ~~of slavery~~. That led to the abolition of slavery. This
 year is the centenary of the abolition of slavery in the British
 Empire. Slavery is no longer tolerated in any civilised
 community today. It took a civil war to abolish it in
 the United States of America, and for centuries, although
 slavery is contrary to ^{essential} Christian principles, it continued to
 exist even in Christian countries. John Wesley was against
 slavery, but George Whitefield was not against it, & there were
 other earnest men of whose Christian sincerity we can entertain
 no reasonable doubt, who refused to support the movement

for its abolition. Their conscience on this question had not been awakened. Wilberforce, the great leader of the movement met strong opposition from those who ought to have supported him, & it took ^{nearly} half a century of hard fighting to secure ~~the~~ his object. In fact Wilberforce was on his death bed when he heard the news that the British Parliament had passed the Slave Emancipation act.

A similar effort awaits us who aim at awakening the public conscience on the gambling evil. The extent of the evil is acknowledged ~~by~~ even by those who won't acknowledge it is wrong in principle. It is to such as well as to sincere Christians that I appeal to look at the facts, to grasp the principle, & to speak & act accordingly.

The Christian view of gambling is that it is wrong in principle & therefore not to be tolerated or condoned or countenanced in any way by any private person or by any public institution. In the language of the people, all forms - N. B. all forms - of gambling are rotten economies, rotten morals, & rotten religion.

But someone will say. "What do you mean by gambling?" I mean by gambling an appeal to chance to determine the ownership of property. This ~~chance~~ appeal to chance may be made in many ways, the spin of a coin, the turn of a card, the turn of a wheel, the shaking & throwing of dice, the running of horses or dogs & other ways too numerous to mention just now. The essential point to grasp is that property - usually money - passes from one person to another, but in return for services rendered or goods supplied, but solely & simply on the appeal to chance. If I am asked ^{by any one} what I mean by gambling, my reply to such a person would be: - "I mean by gambling an attempt to get, by chance, money which

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The general object of business men is to reduce fluctuations to a minimum, to keep business steady