

LAWFUL *Christian* AMUSEMENTS



Lachlan Cumming Vass
(1831-1896)

Lawful Christian Amusements

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Lawful Christian Amusements

1. Introduction

a. Questions

“What are lawful Christian amusements?” is an eminently practical question of the hour. How to decide it clearly is a perplexity. All sweets are not wholesome; many surfeit,¹ sicken, and kill. The enchantments of pleasure often fascinate a person until sudden darkness shrouds body and soul in wretchedness. Who has not heard merry songs sink into mournful sighs? The Savior Himself affirms that among other destroyers of the precious seed are the “pleasures of this life” (Luk 8:14), thorns that choke all that is good, that prevent any fruit from reaching perfection. What, then, are the “pleasures of this life”? They are a vast variety of alluring and popular pursuits in the realm of literature or science, or search after wealth, or mere physical or sensual delights. They are pleasures that are neither sanctified by God’s approval nor conducive to spiritual prosperity. On the contrary, their tendency and effect are to stifle all holy growth. They stifle all blessed influences that seemed about to spring up in the soul, so that no fruit is matured. Since promising forms of life are thus fatally arrested, the apostolic epistles abound with warnings to professing Christians against being “lovers of

¹ **surfeit** – overfeed and produce sickness.

pleasures more than lovers of God,” against conformity to this world, and against “all appearance” or every form of evil (2Ti 3:4; Rom 12:2; 1Th 5:22).

Is the Christian life, then, confined to strictly religious exercises? Are there no legitimate pleasures, in the popular sense, for the church member? Can he never participate in any of the customary amusements of his day and generation without a flash of divine anger flaming across his pathway? For God’s children there are joys abundant and fadeless, inexhaustible in variety and richness—green pastures and gardens of delights where their lines have indeed fallen in pleasant places, and where all their borders are made of pleasant stones. Fountains of living pleasures are bursting up for them all along their earthly journey, and they know and have the choicest amusements that can ensure the zest of noblest and enduring recreation (Psa 16:6, 11; 36:8; 23:2, 6; Isa 54:12).

b. A Difference

Still, a contrast exists between proper and healthful pleasures and those that choke all spiritual life. Or, to be more specific, a positive division runs between amusements that are lawful and amusements that are unlawful to the Christian. How can a Christian satisfactorily reach a wise decision between the opposing claims for his devotion?

2. The Christian Life

First, then, this question claims answer: What is Christian life? A few salient² characteristics will draw the picture.

a. Consecration

Christian life is a true and hearty consecration of self to God, with new views and new motives.

In some happy cases, God's children are not conscious of a time when they did not love God. So early did the work of sovereign saving grace begin that they cannot trace the blessed history of the death of the carnal mind and enmity to God and the dawn of the new life. For this reason, doubts sometimes assail them as to the reality of their new birth. Let such Christians rather bless God for His sweet leading, be thankful for the fruits of piety that prove true life in the soul, and always abide in faith in the Savior (2Ti 2:1).

Many other Christians, though conscious of having led sinful lives, cannot mark the exact hour of their birth, under the power of the Holy Ghost, into the kingdom of Christ, by any sharp contrast of views. The new birth is a radical work that changes man's inner nature, but the vital question is not about the *time*, but the *fact*. The blind man restored to sight was conscious that once he could not see, but that he did now see. Paul felt that he had been dead and was made alive. And in the large and general history of Christian life there is commonly a deep consciousness of fresh views of the evil of

² **salient** – prominent; notable.

sin, the corruption of the human heart, the poverty of our own righteousness, the value and glory of the redemption by Jesus Christ and the preciousness of a personal Savior. New love fills the renewed heart, and peace that passes understanding comforts the often-times surprised and adoring believer (1Jo 4:19; 1Pe 2:7; Rom 5:1; Phi 4:7).

New motives arise from these new views of grace, life, and duty. Man's chief end is felt and confessed to be to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. All aims in life become higher and nobler (1Co 10:31). Sin is crushed and nearly destroyed, because God has so loved us and we, bought with a great price, are God's chosen sheep. The Christian life is eminently a receptive life. Through the cross the opened heart receives from God all its treasures—pardon, peace, sanctification, strength, defense, faith, hope, and glory. We can do nothing less than to consecrate ourselves gladly and entirely to the adorable Redeemer (1Co 6:20; Rom 12:1).

b. Productiveness

Next, Christian life is productive.

Wherever there is healthy life there must be growth and fruit-bearing. Growth and fruit will be seen in personal character and usefulness. Their distinctive trait must be holiness. Christians must “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18)—grow like Christ, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of His fullness (Eph 4:13). So their light must shine and their good works must abound that they may glorify their Father

which is in heaven (Mat 5:16). For “herein,” said Jesus, “is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (Joh 15:8).

c. Self-denial

Such Christian life involves self-denial.

For the Christian life to prosper, it needs to be cultivated, and this costs both care and hard work. Respect for those around us, the effort to love our neighbors as ourselves, our control of wayward desires, our resistance of temptations, our very performance of plain daily holy duties, and the whole range of Christian obligations require patience, pity, love, sacrifice of personal ease and natural selfishness for their right performance. These often involve mighty effort and sharp inner conflict. Yet Christians must take up the cross, follow Jesus, and forsake all for Him. Denying all ungodliness, they must “bear...one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Ti 2:12; Gal 6:2). They must imitate Him Who said of Himself, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat 20:28).

d. Obedience

So Christian life must be one of supreme obedience to God’s law, and therefore one of obedience and fidelity to His church.

There is but one code of law which is supreme, the Holy Bible. It is God’s inspired and authoritative Word. It must be loved and carefully studied. How can any true child of God neglect the Father’s tender messages,

or any loyal subject turn from the plans and commands of his wise, infallible, just, and lawful King? Then, the church is God's kingdom, founded and loved by Him, and is commissioned to gather and train His elect. And this church is to teach and enforce these sacred oracles of God on her loyal subjects. This is organized life and needs perfect regulation under perfect law in family and church and wherever it is exhibited.

e. Oneness

*It will suffice to add that hereafter this
Christian life is one.*

We cannot be one thing on earth and another of different type and order in heaven. After death is the judgment, and the character formed here is the indicator of the decision there, made from the records in open court under the eye of the infallible and just Judge. For when the sea and land and death and the grave shall give up their dead, according to their words and their works the dead will be judged and justified or condemned finally and forever (Mat 12:37; 25:46; Rev 20:13). Holy life here begun shall be carried on unto perfection by Him Who gave it birth in one continued career of growing brightness.

But this present world is irreconcilably hostile to this Christian purity and uniformity of life and marshals many tempting pleasures to choke it in its infancy. This divine life must be filled and girded with heavenly power. It must draw its trusted weapons from the armory of the cross. As humble, sincere Christian warriors wrestle with the rulers of darkness and with

spiritual wickedness, they must grasp and wield all the varied forces of faith, wisdom, prayer, and love. Thus, they may advance in grace and strength. Thus, they may stand fast and persevere against every form of evil, and, having done all, stand safe and happy under the victorious banner of Jesus.

f. Summary

What, then, are the leading traits of Christian life?

True and hearty consecration of self to God in Christ, with new views and new motives; fruit-bearing; self-denial; supreme obedience to God's law and loyalty to His church; and oneness of spiritual organic life here and hereafter.

In view of this, how shall Christians enjoy the new life? How shall they enjoy lawful pleasures and amusements? How shall they avoid those that will choke spiritual life and leave the professors of religion stunted, withered, worthless, dead—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? What principles shall plainly mark out the right road?

A Christless world with Christless customs confronts God's church with her Christ-given laws. Fashion opposes grace. A conflict, a decision, is before us, and especially as it affects our precious little children and the young, immature and unmarried men and maidens. Unquestionably, if we think any custom or amusement is either improper or sinful, we should give a reason solid and clear enough to readily convince the

doubting. The mere assertion that a certain amusement is wrong will not be sufficient.

1. It is true that God has given to parents and guardians *authority* that should be exercised over all under their roof. Abraham *commanded* all his children and servants and was blessed for his conduct. Failure to exercise this divine rule will bring evil on a household as the history of Eli's house shows (Gen 18:19; 1Sa 3:13).

2. But authority arbitrarily wielded, without good reasons or love, is hurtful. For example, a Christian father said to his son, "I do not say *pro* or *con*³ about card-playing, but it must not be practiced in my house." That boy ran away to sea.⁴ His father ought to have given clear reasons built on truth against the practice; then he should have stood firm as Gibraltar in tender love on these reasons. Despotism creates rebels against even good.

3. Remember also that flexible principles will not suffice. Nobody respects a character that will change under every pressure. It cannot be that what is immoral, immodest, and inconsistent with Christian purity at home is right in Paris, in Baltimore, or in New York. It has been well said that it is an offence to sound morals for one to indulge in amusements behind lock

³ *pro* or *con* – for or against; he would not provide reasonable arguments for or against card-playing.

⁴ See essays on *The Christian and Puritan Theories of Amusements*, by Rev. Austin Phelps, D. D., from which several thoughts have been adopted.

and key when he may not enjoy them with open windows. It cannot be right for parents to seek enjoyment where they forbid their children to go lest they be defiled, or to send their children where they as Christians decline to be seen. "Blunt men of the world will denounce such ethics as the ethics of a sneak."

Christian conduct requires no cloak but comes to the light that its deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God (Joh 3:21). Matthew tells us that our gracious Lord denounced double-faced folks as "whited sepulchers"; yea, in hot indignation He exclaimed, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mat 23:27, 33).

4. Yet, undoubtedly, we all sometimes need relaxation from busy cares. Life is not one long funeral. Youth wants bird songs and the fragrance of morning. It needs lungfuls of dewy air—but it needs them all harmonious, fresh, pure, and full of true life. Riper age should sometimes unbend from the rigidity and pressure of years and cheerily experience again the elasticity of early days. An old proverb says, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." But what will all play—or wrong play—make him? Better far no play than evil play! *Dullness* is preferable to *badness*, even though some—mainly the thoughtless and fashionable—seem to prefer badness. If the choice is set before us, it is wiser to choose few rather than improper or ruinous recreations. Stolen waters may be sweet, but the brand of unholy theft is burned on the soul, and God sees it, though we close our eyes. Sharp-edged tools are not for children, and he is unwise who risks the dangerous

experiment. Whether from natural bias to evil, from ignorance, or from inexperience, the average youth would certainly choose many popular pleasures and amusements that would hurt him, if not destroy him.

3. Tests for Lawful Amusements

By what crucial tests, then, shall amusements be shown to be lawful? *The fundamental position is that they must accord with Bible tests...*

Deep down in the hearts of all men in Christian lands lives the feeling that [the Bible's] code of morals and religion is perfect and supreme. Everyone is bound by it alike and equally. Those not directly connected with the church seem to think it is not *their* law and chart. *But it is.* It matters not that they neglect and disown it. God is their Lawgiver; the Holy Scriptures are infallible, divine, and universal law. But the church member freely acknowledges that God's Word is authoritative to him. Whatever is not of faith is, for him, sin. Whatever he does, he looks for a "Thus saith the Lord" or an endorsement by the general sense of the words of the heavenly King. Therefore, the Christian must test all recreations by the Bible.

a. Purity

Amusements must be pure. Modesty, honesty, and purity are sweet virtues admired by men and required by God. "Chambering and wantonness"⁵ must be far from the child of heaven (Rom 13:13). Any pleasure

⁵ **chambering and wantonness** – sexual immorality and sensuality.

that has in itself the elements, seed, and power of impurity or dishonesty is unlawful for anyone. Therefore, the horse race, with its betting and many evil associations, is sinful. So, also, the gambling table, in all its varieties and fascinations, whether the stakes be small or large, is corrupt and is forbidden even by human law.⁶ As Tertullian said long ago, “Nowhere is the Christian anything but a Christian.” He surely should not touch or advocate any amusement that is not honest, pure, and modest in itself any sooner than he would choose spoiled and diseased meat instead of good meat or prefer counterfeit money to the genuine. He should not willingly even witness indecencies, for God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab 1:13). They must “be...clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”—made clean through the Word of Christ (Isa 52:11; Joh 15:3). Christians are temples of the Holy Ghost and members of Christ, and they must not be defiled. But “whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are...of good report,” these they may richly and innocently enjoy (2Co 6:15, 17; Phi 4:8).

b. Spiritually Helpful

Amusements should be spiritually helpful. If they make us better in God’s sight, they are lawful. If they have not this tendency or effect, they should be shunned as deadly pestilences, as devices of Satan for the soul’s undoing. “What!” says a doubter, “Apply such a test to a boat ride, to a tea party, to a game of croquet?” Yes. Why not? Would not the introduction of the genial

⁶ He is referring to the laws of his time in the 1800s.

and gentle spirit of Christ into many of the small amusements of life—not to speak of the great ones—be an invaluable blessing and kill many a sharp speech, many an envious thought, many an unkind action? Would it not calm the mind, beautify the whole character, and bring exhilarating sunshine into laughter, play, and song?

It is distinctly affirmed that our amusements should help the soul. God enumerates the most common physical acts and pleasures of this life as representatives of all acts and pleasures. He says through His inspired apostle, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). Christians are bound to glorify Him in their bodies and spirits, which are His. They are bought with a great price—even the precious blood of His dear Son—and have no right to do anything or find enjoyment in any act, however trivial, that will dim the brightness of the new life.

Does a Christian not have a noble social nature to be cultivated? Does a Christian not have common and praiseworthy sympathies, friendships, and tastes that should be exercised and developed by pleasant use? Should not all the lighter acts and recreations promote these ends and give healthful exercise to every charming capability of these wondrous natures? Can there be any such healthy development except through the use of those delightful excitements which breathe the innocence and light of heaven and involve a rightful use of God’s various gifts and the infinite opportunities of His gracious providences? Through these means, a

Christian will obtain that “merry heart [that] doeth good like a medicine” (Pro 17:22). Carrying such a heart, the Christian will be a blessing. What a gift and light is a playful wit! How its flashes brighten any social circle! But that humor should be loving, sanctified, truthful, not that bastard species of fun-making which gets its life and power from its scorpion-sting—from the damage it inflicts or by some wayward or wanton exaggeration that rises to untruthfulness. Such is not Christian wit. Its light is not from a holy, loving, Christlike nature, and its exercise is not to be listed among lawful delights. Paul says there is a filthiness and a species of foolish talking and scurrilous jesting that is not fitting for saints (Eph 5:4). “Be not ye therefore partakers with...the children of disobedience” (Eph 5:7, 8).

But any recreation that elevates, broadens, and brightens our natural abilities, to better fit us to do our duty well and cheerfully before God and to help our fellows, may rightly be included among lawful Christian amusements. By giving health, vigor, and activity to the body and the mind, such amusements increase our capacity for spiritual growth and contribute to a healthy spiritual life.

On the contrary are those diversions—often fascinating and fashionable—that make us unfit for serious duties. They undermine health and character. They lead into temptation to do wrong or to waste money or time in extravagance of dress or fashionable display. They tempt us to live beyond our legitimate means. Or they cultivate evil associations or tastes and so distract

the heart and weary the body, utterly destroying all true spiritual comfort in the private and public worship of God. Such diversions are all wrong and are unlawful for the Christian. I, along with many pastors, have heard the candid confession that after a night's indulgence in some of the common forms of popular amusement the heart could not get near to God before sleep in true prayer. I say "true prayer" for much "saying prayers" is nothing but hollow muttering of formulas rather than worship from the soul that God accepts.

How can any simple, sincere child of God be happy or satisfied unless his occupations be holy? He wants all the cheerful entertainments in his daily journey to be those for which he can praise God because they have brought pure refreshment to his tired spirit and vigor to his renewed nature. He will have no problem with those amusements that make his soul laugh before God. Such pure recreations will lift up his soul with joyful excitement as he senses the harmony of all his natural powers, and they give his soul the delightful liberty of assured security as he knows his motives are pure, his hopes are elevated, and he is resting in faith.

c. Wholesome Influence

It naturally follows that, to be lawful, *Christian amusements should have a wholesome influence on others*. How reluctant people are to acknowledge their obligation to promote their neighbors' welfare! Perhaps in no direction is this more evident than when they are seeking their pleasure. Yet frequently pleasures may be innocent in themselves to us personally

but may be misunderstood by others and would hurt them. They may either cause them pain, make them doubt the reality and value of religion, or lead them into evil acts. Paul illustrates this principle by declaring his liberty to eat meat that had been placed before an idol, which was to him a mere nothing; but, finding that some sincere believers were liable to be led astray, get erroneous ideas, or fall into some idolatrous practice that might ruin their souls, he says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1Co 8:13). Paul illustrates this again in his refusal to receive the support that he could justly claim from mission churches in his mission work. He did this to avoid misunderstanding and injury to the young church and the cause of the Redeemer.

In choosing amusements we must apply the same principle. God has certainly made us our brothers' keepers. He has commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be pitiful and courteous, and as heirs of the grace of life to help and cheer everyone in all possible ways (Gen 4:9-10; Mat 7:12; 22:39; 1Pe 3:7-8). In love, we must please all men for their good, remembering how Christ pleased not Himself selfishly, but ministered joyfully to others (Rom 15:2-3; 1Co 10:33; Mat 20:28). While breathing the fragrance of rosy hours, Christ's child must, under His royal law, be as glad to give joy as was Jonathan to bend the sportive bow with David, and as careful as Jerusalem saints to offend no one by any of the liberties he is allowed. Every Christian must be a pattern, especially toward them that are

without, in all their general daily habits, that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him (Act 4:32; Col 4:5; Ti 2:7; 1Ti 4:12).

How much trouble and evil would be avoided were these sound scriptural rules observed! Evil wrecks many fond hopes. What sadness in this recent wail of a Christian mother: “I kept cards and round dances out of my house as long as possible, but my daughters attended a party at the house of an elder in our church who has always been regarded as a very saintly man. There the round dances were introduced, and ever since I have been obliged to yield, for my children say to me, ‘Are you any better than Mr. H.? He allows dancing in his house.’ What could I reply to that?”

James W. Alexander wrote these significant words: “I am persuaded that the door at which influences enter that contradict parental instruction and example is *yielding to the ways of good society*. By dress, looks, and amusements, an atmosphere is formed that is not the atmosphere of Christianity. More than ever, I feel that our families must stand in a kind but determined opposition to the fashion of the world, breasting its waves like the Eddystone lighthouse.⁷ And I have found nothing yet that requires more courage and independence than to rise a little, but decidedly, above the *par* of the religious world around us.” Surely, then, amusements that exercise evil influences on others are unlawful for Christians. To do good and not to do evil, to

⁷ **Eddystone lighthouse** – lighthouse on the Eddystone Rocks, south of Rame Head in Cornwall, England.

increase light and joy and not to create or foster darkness and pain, is their heaven-born mission.

d. Proportioned to Life Work

Another important reflection is that all recreations should be in due proportion to our life work.

*Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.*

This life is not all of life. Its hours are crowded with duties whose right performance has a vast sweep of influence on us and others, now and forever. Time must be redeemed. If life is not a funeral, neither is it a comedy. It is serious. Responsibility for moments and work is imminent and real. When thick nights—ever threatening—fall on life, the cheap candles of frivolous pleasure will go out and darkness will be doubled. Idle moments steal heavenly sunshine, while weeds of worldliness choke the Word. A time there is for laughter, but a time also for thought. Many forget all this, and their mirth and amusement are too often grievously misplaced. God's sincere children are sometimes greatly depressed when they see the house of God forsaken, where earnest worship and prayer are offered, while numbers—some of them members of these same churches—flock to a gathering for vain and giddy amusement. Maybe even the sound of the merry revelry reaches the church where a handful of Christians are worshipping God in faith and hope, while others neglect His claims for the twanging of the fiddle and the embraces of the immodest dance.

Decent respect is due from *all men* to the services of the sanctuary, but surely it is more than appropriate—it is high duty—on the part of professing Christians to forsake all for the honor of their Lord. Therefore, the time for all amusements must be judiciously selected, and those are unlawful that directly conflict with duty to God or that require the time that should be devoted to His service.

Further, the time given to recreation must bear an honest *proportion* to the claims of God's worship and of the serious daily duties God has imposed on men. Will a man rob God? Laborers in His vineyard have an appointed work and a final reckoning. The Master freely gives music and feasting to the faithful, but He does so to lead them through suitable relaxation into green pastures on earth and to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Appropriate fun and frolic will not degenerate into cheating folly, nor should cheering reliefs from busy life usurp the real responsibilities of time and eternity. The servants are indeed making themselves merry, but the controlling aim of their lives is not the eating and the drinking, the enticing amusements of a day. Yes, they do sit at a bountiful table spread from the rich resources of the Master Who has girded Himself and made them His own guests and serves them! (Luk 12:37). Those who live in pleasures are dead while they live (1Ti 5:6), but when amusements are sought decently and in order, and in due proportion to the work God has assigned, they are right.

Our life work is to get ready for a long eternity. Unwisely devoting our time, care, and wealth to things

that hinder our preparation for eternity can result only in bitter lamentations. The wailing confession of the worldling Lord Chesterfield⁸ will be fully realized. “I have run,” says he, “the silly round of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low; whereas those that have not experienced always over-rate them. They only see their gay⁹ outside and are dazzled with the glare, but I have seen behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine; I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle and pleasure of this world had any reality. But I look on all that has passed as one of the romantic dreams that opium commonly creates, and I by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive¹⁰ dream”...¹¹

⁸ **Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield** (1694-1773) – British statesman, diplomat, man of letters, and acclaimed wit.

⁹ **gay** – fine; showy.

¹⁰ **fugitive** – fleeting.

¹¹ Vass included a section here urging church members to be submissive to their church’s rulings on the permissibility of particular amusements. Chapel Library omitted this

4. Conclusion

I hope I have handled this whole question fairly and fully enough to lead you to a decided conclusion. I think every careful and honest mind should be able to determine which amusements are lawful for the consistent Christian in the light of the reflections and arguments I have presented. Review the discussion:

First, *what is Christian life*? It is a life consecrated, enjoying new views and new motives, receptive, productive, self-denying, obedient to God's law and loyal to the church; and it is one [a unified whole] here and hereafter. This fully-organized life moves with authority in family, society, and church, yet this authority is not despotic, but exercised with reason and love, and rests on solid, unchangeable principles. Human life is neither a funeral nor a comedy, and everyone needs, among earnest, practical labors, natural restoration from healthful relaxation and cheering sunshine. The essential characteristics and vital principles of this high and heavenly Christian life must determine what are lawful amusements for the children of the heavenly King.

God's infallible Word gives us the required and sufficient standard that can reveal which are the best pastimes for charming our weary hours without chilling or cursing our immortal spirit. With this test, these entertainments must be physically pure and spiritually helpful, wholesome in their influence on others, [and]

section reflecting the particular form of church government in Vass's context.

rightly proportioned to the duties of our whole life work...

Recreations thus tried and adopted will be both lawful and Christian. Joyous wings will be given to all noble social gifts and possibilities. A happy process of development will beautify each individual and bless all. A natural and healthy variety of chaste delights will possess heart and soul, and will beautifully equalize, elevate, and strengthen our powers—so capable of virtuous affections—and keep the whole man active and useful, an illustration of the harmonious union of piety and pleasure.

*Lord, in my view let both united be:
I live in pleasure when I live with thee.*

A Challenge

The heart of every zealous and affectionate pastor is pained when he warns his people against the fascinations of worldly amusements and they lightly throw off the whole subject as though it did not concern them. He clearly sees that they are in danger of great spiritual loss, if not of shipwreck. I earnestly renew again my pleas drawn from God's holy book. Is not the question of lawful Christian amusements a most practical one and worthy of honest and careful consideration? I challenge you, reader, to take it to the Bible and test it there. That is the only sure source of a solution.

Take the whole subject, with your Bible in your hand and in your head and heart, to the throne of grace. Pray and pray again, and test it there. On your knees

seek light. Ought not this to be done? Will not you do this? Will you not do it now?

I challenge you to let the light of history speak. Let the testimony of judicious, pious men and women, of extended experience and observation, speak. Let your own experience and knowledge speak. What has been the effect of free indulgence in the kind of amusements that cannot sustain these proposed tests? What has been its effect on Christian and general society?

Should you differ from my statements and conclusions, I challenge you to inquire whether you may be in error. Would it not be unfair, unworthy, prejudiced treatment to say flippantly, “I do not think so,” and then dismiss the question? You cannot dismiss God thus. No follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, under covenant commitments as a member of His church, can refuse to investigate and apply these solemn considerations without grievous risk and sin. Be wise, and do not incur the rebuke, “My people doth not consider” (Isa 1:3).

Let none of God’s redeemed children sin by adding force to the current of worldliness. Let all beware lest “the pleasures of this life” choke the Word in their heart, and so their life be a failure at last. What a failure! Sad—sad indeed—the fate of those whose barren amusements in this life crush their hearts with the terror of misery hereafter, whose songs when living vanish to be replaced by eternal sighs when lost. ❧