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Suffering for Conscience' Sake a Christian Duty One Should Not Seek to Shirk.

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It is part of true Christianity to be conscientious in one's every act. God's Word is the Christian's guide and rule of life, and his conscience binds him to follow its rule and guidance. If in any case he fails to do so, his conscience will reproach him. Therefore, if he would live conscientiously, he must bring all his actions into harmony with the teachings of the Bible. But one cannot do so without finding that many people take offense thereat. For instance, it is a matter of conscience for us to abide by the Biblical doctrine of conversion, predestination, the Sacraments *et al.*; to have no church-fellowship with all such denominations or synods as teach a doctrine different from what we know to be the truth. Our conscience being bound by the Word of God, we cannot do otherwise. But what is the consequence? People seem not to understand our position and therefore accuse us of conceit, bigotry, and of preventing Christian unity in the Church. What are we to do in the matter? We would fain avoid all this and live in peace and harmony with all that call upon the name of Jesus. But as that would mean sanctioning false doctrines and teaching otherwise than God's Word teaches, which for conscience' sake we cannot do, we must suffer uncharitable judgments and unmerited condemnation at the hands of those who would be our brethren. Yet we would rather have all the world against us than know that we are condemned by God and His Word. Ministers of the Gospel are criticized as being narrow-minded and fanatical, and they are hated by the public because for conscience' sake they refuse to officiate at some funerals or marriages or to admit unworthy communicants to the Lord's Table. And such cases are by no means rare in which earnest Christians experience enmity and annoyance from neighbors and relatives because of their Chris-

The Eighteenth Amendment Not Moral.

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The governors of our States and President Harding, in conference some time ago, discussing various sides of the Prohibition Amendment, declared unanimously that Prohibition is "*not a question of morals or ethics, but purely an economic and financial question and as such should be treated by the State.*"

This is verbatim their declaration as stated in various papers. I have given their words in italics in order to emphasize them.

I have always been of the same conviction as these high men, but when I asserted the truth, many church people would not listen to me.

By this statement the high conference, in my estimation, proved wiser than many ministers and churches.

Let everybody, churchman or citizen, or both in one person, take notice of the three very definite and concisely put truths which they teach; *viz.*:—

First, Prohibition is not a moral, or ethical, question.

Secondly, It is purely an economic and financial question.

Thirdly, As such it should be treated by the State.

There was a time when the work for the Eighteenth Amendment engrossed some church people to an extent as if it concerned their eternal salvation. The devil has many ways of tempting. As he tempted Adam and Eve to lust after, and take, what God had forbidden, so he now tempts men and women to refuse and despise what God, as we shall soon see, has ordained for our proper use and acceptance with thanksgiving. 1 Tim. 4, 1—5. Believing in a coming more earthly than spiritual, millennium, — a misunderstanding of Rev. 20, but in their estimation a most important thing on earth, — some church people fancied they could assist God in bringing this about by forcing in a total abstinence amendment. Yet they forgot that the end does not justify the means, and they used false arguments. I heard speakers pronounce intoxicants “devil’s drinks,” an expression in which there is no sense. I heard them use as their motto “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” as if the words had Bible sanction. Did they not know how decidedly these words are condemned in Holy Writ, Col. 2, 22. 23? They asserted that the wine Christ made, and that the wine He Himself drank when the Pharisaic temperance people called him a “wine-bibber” (Mat. 11, 19; Luke 7, 34) was not intoxicating, although the Greek *oinos* stood there directly against them. Compare Eph. 5, 18, where the same Greek word is used.

Our statesmen in conference know better and declare that the Eighteenth Amendment, or Prohibition, is not even “a moral or ethical question,” still less anything that in any way pertains to eternity; it is “purely an economic and financial question”; that is, it is only a State affair.

They seem to agree in this, that what is truly moral must not only harmonize with the Bible, but must also have man’s heart in it. Since, however, the State, as such, has nothing to do with

the Bible and has no means of reaching man's heart, a truly moral work must be left to the Church, which has the means of effecting true morality and ethics.

The present State temperance and the Christian temperateness are two different things. The term temperance did not originally mean total abstinence. It can now be used only as a State-word, not as a Church-word. The Church's temperateness is not entire abstinence, but self-control in everything. 1 Cor. 9, 25. In the sense of total abstinence, I dare say after thorough study, the word temperance is found nowhere in the Bible. Wherever in our Authorized Version the word "temperance" is found, the translation ought to be *temperateness*, or still better *self-control*, and this word you will find invariably, I believe, in the Revised Version.

The statesmen in conference seem to be well enlightened also in religious things. They seem to understand that the State in our country has to do only with man's outward, superficial appearance and conduct, and this is as truly Biblical as it is Lutheran.

To natural man — and people of the State are generally but natural, not spiritual — total abstinence seems to be the surest way of preventing drunkenness, just as granting a divorce to some married people seems to be the surest way of preventing family strife. Yet the divorce laws do not extend to peaceable families, while the Eighteenth Amendment actually sets down all Americans as a set of drunkards to be held in check by this non-discriminating amendment.

Consistency, which is said to be a jewel, would require a change in the divorce laws or in the Eighteenth Amendment. Since drinking is entirely forbidden because some men get drunk, marriage should also be forbidden because some married people fight, or since divorce laws extend only to fighting families, the Eighteenth Amendment should have been so fixed as to extend only to drunkards.

Fighting has, as well as drunkenness, its root in the sinful state of man's heart, and, as stated before, with the heart the State has nothing to do.

According to the Bible, God permits men to use strong drinks, and marriage is ordained by Him. He commanded the Israelites to use wine, even "strong wine," for a drink-offering. Ex. 29, 40; Num. 28, 7, etc. As they could not offer wine without making it, the command to offer wine, of course, implied a divine order to make wine. And we find this divine order not only for the pur-

pose of offering to God, but also for man's proper and moderate enjoyment (Eecl. 9, 7; also "strong drink," Deut. 14, 26), for strengthening the body, and for medicine, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New. Prov. 31, 6; 1 Tim. 5, 23.

Wine and, by the way, women also are some of God's gifts to man, both of which gifts are in many ways shamefully misused by man. But forbidding the use of these gifts will necessarily prove a failure.

In the eyes of the State a decent appearance of a citizen, whether this be produced by law, or whether false motives actuate such a citizen, such as to gain favor with God or respect among men, places this citizen among the good, the estimable, the praiseworthy. In the sight of the Prohibition law a man is a good man when he keeps from his stomach intoxicating spirits, although his heart may simultaneously be filled with hellish spirits, black or, perhaps white, such as filled the hearts of the Pharisees.

It is not so with God, for He looks at the heart. "Man" — in the present case the State — "looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. 16, 7. Christ says: "God knoweth your hearts; for *that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*" Luke 16, 15.

Also in regard to the Eighteenth Amendment, Christ is not satisfied with an external, total abstinence produced by law. He does not demand this, but He demands that the drunkard's or any other man's sinful cravings of the heart be drowned, annihilated, destroyed, when He says: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your *hearts* be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." Luke 21, 34.

To affairs of this world — politics, business, etc. — a Christian may straightly and honestly put only head and hand, but in his relation to God and in religious things he must have his heart, and indeed a heart with faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11, 6), and here it is true that what is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14, 23), for which reason a church father says of heathen virtues that they are but glittering vices. What is often called good or great works or gifts may be of great service to those for whom they are done, but if done from false motives, they are worse than nothing in the eyes of God. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for doing "all their works to be seen by men." Matt. 23, 5.

If we lived only for this life, then outward deeds, outward decent appearance, would be all that would be necessary; for then there would be no God to look on our hearts. If the State can put through an amendment acknowledging that we are descendants of apes, as some claim, even professors and ministers, there need be no great worry about eternity; there would be little difference between man and beast.

But because God looks on the heart, the true Christian *temperateness* cannot fall in with the State temperance or, which is the same, the world's temperance. Christ's kingdom, also in this respect, is not of this world. Take notice that Christ pronounced these words not to an ordinary citizen, but to a prominent and not entirely unconscientious officer of the government. John 18, 36.

Also the secular government, it is true, is instituted by God, but only for the sake of outward peace and external order. Rom. 13; Matt. 22, 21. If our country was on the way to ruin before the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment, which, I understand, is generally denied, the amendment was proper. For as the single individual, when a drunkard (Prov. 23, 29—31 speaks of a drunkard), is forbidden to "look upon the wine when it is red," so also a whole country, if turning to drunkenness, ought, by the government, to be prevented from "looking on the wine."

The questions, however, in this connection, which I shall not attempt to settle, are these: Was our country so deeply infatuated with the vice of drunkenness that a total abstinence law became necessary? and, Was there, in this country of liberty, no better and wiser way of curing drunkenness than by enacting a total abstinence amendment?

There is, according to Scripture, also another kind of intoxication, which ought not to be overlooked. Is. 29, 9 describes this: "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." If one is called "wet," the other may be called "dry." One is to fill the stomach with what is commonly designated as intoxicants, the other is to fill the head with fanaticism and folly. The two seem to be against each other, and probably were, as the agitation for the Eighteenth Amendment was going on. The "dry" conquered, but many wise men now claim that it would have been better for the peace and prosperity of our country if the amendment had run against the "dry" intoxication as strongly as it now runs against the "wet." As to their effects the two are much alike; they differ chiefly in the stuff imbibed. It is also

difficult for people to understand the danger of the "dry," for the greatest "dry drunkards" commend it and have a way of making it appear as if it were a virtue instead of a vice. Total abstinence from "dry" intoxication has Scripture on its side; the "wet" has not. Compare 1 Tim. 4, 3, 4.

As Christians we are members of the Church of Christ, and that is the main thing. We are bound more closely together as Christians than as citizens, for we constitute one spiritual body (1 Cor. 12, 27; Eph. 5, 30), while as citizens we are only members of the State, forming with others an outward political union.

As Christians our most important service to the country is missionary work among the many civilized heathen citizens. In making men Christians we make them also the best of citizens. As members of the State, *i. e.*, as citizens, we seek the welfare of the State or, as Scripture expresses it (Jer. 29, 7), "the peace of the city." But in our country we are not to have anything to do with affairs of our Government as Christians, but as citizens or, if you prefer, as Christian citizens.

Since the State has established total abstinence, and since abstinence from one or another of God's gifts, even when commanded to be used, does not in every case involve sin, we can as obedient citizens submit to the law. But to men as Christians this law is an encroachment upon religious liberty, and to men as citizens it encroaches upon civil liberty, and both these liberties are guaranteed in this country by constitutional documents. I here consider our rights from the fundamental principles and original constitutional standpoint. Without sanctioning the term "liberty" in all its colonial aspects or other misuses, it cannot be denied that it was the *passé-partout* to "Americanism." "Death" was claimed preferable to failure of obtaining "liberty."

Those who differ with me look on the present political and practical side of the question. They ignore retrospection and demand unconditional so-called advancement, the final end of which they are wise enough not to let us know. But they will tell us not to complain of encroachment on liberties; for our legislators are representatives of all citizens and act in the name of all. They are chosen by a majority, and there is no restraint laid upon the majority to protect the minority against possible injustice.

In State affairs, reason is the guide, and any measure sustained by somewhat reasonable arguments will carry if the propounder has

patience enough and money enough to work for it, invigorate and reiterate his arguments, if necessary for fifty to seventy-five years.

But an important Christian reason for submitting to the law is the avoidance of giving offense to such Christians as are weak, but sincere, and who, in their ignorance, believe it wrong to use intoxicants, or who hold total abstinence to be a Christian virtue. As St. Paul says: "None of us liveth to himself"; and: "If thy brother" — let us stress the word "brother" — "be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." Rom. 14, 7, 15.

To vain, conceited, aggressive, self-righteous hypocrites, however, we are not, I believe, to "give place by subjection." We are to consider them as St. Paul does, as "false brethren, who come in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Gal. 2, 4, 5. Christ Himself did not mind the Pharisees when they called Him a "wine-bibber." He simply blamed them for doing so. And if any total abstainer, in "spying out the Christian liberty," had entered the wedding-chamber in Cana and rebuked Christ for "setting a bad example," he would not have gained much. Also when the Lord was censured for permitting His disciples to "eat and drink" while the disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting, He knew how to defend His children against such Pharisaic accusation. He tells them and us that His children constitute His bride, and He, our Bridegroom, is with us, so that we need fast neither bodily nor spiritually. Luke 5, 23, etc.

I myself am an abstainer, not because of the law or for fear of any "devils' drinks," nor because I consider my abstinence a moral act or a virtue; it is only because I never felt the need of ardent drinks.

In declaring Prohibition to be neither moral nor esthetic, the conference men, having noticed how active some churches still are in the interest of total abstinence, doubtless mean to warn them that, as churches, they need not trouble much about it; for it is "not moral or esthetic." But, of course, as citizens they are not excluded from taking part in it as an "economic and financial affair"; for, the conference says, as such it should be treated, not by the Church, but by the State.
