

1917

# The church and commercialized recreation

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Senior Thesis

"The Church, and Commercialized Recreation"

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THE CHURCH AND COMMERCIALIZED RECREATION.

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- 1 Clubs of the People
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Quotations from

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THE CHURCH AND COMMERCIALIZED RECREATION.

Introduction

The gospel of relaxation was the subject of a speech made by Herbert Spencer at a dinner given in his honor in New York City in 1882. Mr. Spencer called attention to the extreme form of persistent activity which characterises American people. The energy of the savage, he said, was spasmodic; he could not apply himself to work persistently. He lived in the present and did not worry about the future. Civilized man more and more pursues a future goal and applies himself to work until it becomes a passion. "In America" said Spencer, "this strenuous, high pressure life has become extreme and a reaction must be imminent. We take our multitudinous responsibilities too seriously. There are too many lines upon our faces; our gray hairs appear too early; our nervous breakdowns are too frequent. Damaged constitutions and a damaged posterity are among the results. Emerson with his saying that the first requisite of a gentleman is that he be a perfect animal is in the main a safer guide for us than Carlyle with his gospel of work or Roosevelt with his propaganda of the strenuous life."

Impressed with the strenuous character of American life and the need of more rest and recreation, practical common sense, not waiting upon theory, has turned to discover means to relieve tension incident to our present habits of living. Some, as we have said, preach a gospel of relaxation, content to tell us that we are too intense. Others have established schools with practical helps and rules and methods for relaxation, and have brought comfort and relief to many. Again, a sudden and unique interest has suddenly arisen in "play". Men and animals have always played but now we have first become conscious of play and then curious about it. We are anxious to know about the theory of play. If children do not play we teach them. We insist on play! Toward this end a score of movements have sprung into notice whose purpose it is to encourage or provide some form of relaxation. We recall the recreation movement, the physical culture movement, the playground movement, the Boy Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, ever increasing interest in athletics not only in colleges but in our high schools and grammar schools, the radical change in the Young Men's Christian Associations from devotional to hygienic and athletic religion, the renaissance of the gymnasium, the

Olympic games, the increased interest in outdoor life of all kinds; renewed devotion to such sports as tennis, golf, base-ball, foot-ball; the rapid extension of the play motive into almost every branch of education; finally supervised playgrounds, supervised folk dancing, supervised swimming, wading, tramping, gardening, singing, modeling, and story-telling. With very young children the Montessori system seeks to relieve the tension of the old tasks by making the child's activities natural and interesting as well as useful.

More than twenty-five hundred regularly supervised playgrounds and recreation centres are now maintained in about six hundred and fifty cities. A brand new profession has appeared, that of play-leader, employing nearly seven thousand professional workers. Formerly the boy could play on the street, in the back alley or in the back yard. Now the alley and the back yard have disappeared, to a large extent at least, the street is crowded with automobiles and the few remaining spaces are given over to the lawn-mower and the "KEEP OFF" signs.

For reasons which will be shown presently, boys and girls must play. Take away the opportunity for legitimate play and the play instinct, the instinct of rivalry, of initiation will manifest itself in anti-social ways. Hence the juvenile court and the reform school. As one writer puts it "better playgrounds, without schools than schools without playgrounds."

We have been impressed by the strenuous character of our life and have felt the need accordingly of more recreation and play and more harmony and poise in our way of living, and have taken, therefore, a few practical steps in this direction. But suddenly within the most recent days things have happened which have caused us to think more deeply on the whole subject of work and play and have suggested that it is not a local American problem at all but a world problem of the present age. The outbreak of recreation crazes in America may have been the first of these events but it was the calamity which fell upon the world in August, 1914 in the form of the European War which most distinctly called our attention to a careful study of the psychological conditions of our modern life.

Just as we thought the world to be getting very serious and settling down to work to problems of social and individual wellfare and to political and moral reform it has suddenly gone amusement-mad in

America and reverted with unparalleled ferocity to primeval bloodshed in Europe. These amusement crazes have taken many forms but the most virulent form was seen in the dancing mania which has passed through various stages in North and South America. At its height, according to newspaper reports, a tribe of Indians in Nevada built an immense dance hall in the midst of their village and imported a teacher of the tango. Then came the moving-picture craze which has seized the world like an obsession. No one can suppose that this colossal social phenomenon is to be explained by mere fact of the discovery of the cinematograph, and that the people were merely waiting upon the invention in order to flock to the spectacle. The invention was an incident. The real significant fact was the psychological situation.

"Consider the following editorial from a recent number of the 'Nation':-

"The historian will come to grief if he attempts to describe the cause of frivolity in the New York of 1915 A.D. as historians have depicted the frivolity of Rome under the early emperors, and to compare bread and the circus with lobster a la Newburgh and the cabaret. Going back to Rome, and assuming the grand manner, he will speak of a city that drew to itself the booty of the civilized world, of a population enervated by the largess of politicians doling out the plunder of three continents, of a citizenship lulled into civic indifference by rifts and amusements--in other words, an imperial city gone rotten with prosperity. If the parallel holds for New York, the historian would have to describe a city that went mad over cabarets because it had more money than it could spend wisely, because it had no serious interest in the problems of the civic and social life, because its serenity was undisturbed by wars or the fear of wars, because there was no unemployment problem, no city-budget problem, no work-men's compensation problem, no widows' pension problem, no Mexican problem, no German problem. Else how account for a city gone mad over the fox trot and the white lights? Life was much simpler in imperial Rome than it is in New York to-day, though even under the early Caesars the picture was not so uniform as the average historian has painted it. At least we know to-day that the fact of 400,000 unemployed in New York City does not militate against the prosperity of the "movies," which are the circenses of the masses; and the fact of Wall

Street's unemployed has not interfered with the prosperity of the cabarets. Quite the contrary. There is good reason for believing that not all the young men at the afternoon teas are professional idlers and parasites, but that a good many business men and brokers have taken to dancing in the afternoon because there was nothing to do down town. Perhaps the grasshopper in La Fontaine's fable, who sang all summer, did so because business was rotten, and when the ant told him to go and dance in the winter, he was only advising him to do the best possible thing under the circumstances."

To be sure much be said about the evils brought upon society by these forms of popular amusements but let us remind ourselves that the reason for the existence of such a state of affairs is not so much of a conundrum as we may have supposed at first sight. As we have already said, children must play. Men also must play but the question as to where they shall play and how, is one which is ours to answer. Others have been quicker than we to seize the opportunity afforded in this underlying tendency of human life,—to be amused. And these persons, more ambitious and indeed less scrupulous than we, have furnished in a large measure opportunities for the expressional life of the people and have created a demand for a recreation of objective character, that being the line of least resistance. More shall be said later of the relation of industrial fatigue to the "line of least resistance" in seeking after recreation. Thus, the recreational tendencies of human nature have been exploited and commercialized while the institution which should be close to the life of the people has failed to make good its opportunity in affording recreation of an uplifting and natural character.

The outstanding point in view of the fact that our people are amusement-mad is that the madness for amusement is objective rather than subjective. People will be played upon; thus the theatre, the ball-game and other activities are endeavoring to meet the objective demand, while no one, until very recently, has made much of an attempt to develop man's inherent power to amuse himself. The problem, therefore, confronting us might be put thus: How can the church furnish or foster a program of subjective recreation which will be uplifting and will compete, in a measure at least, with the commercialized forms now acting upon the people and drawing them away from the church?



The purpose of this paper is to survey briefly the existing forms of recreation to be found in the average community, and from the best of these forms we hope to formulate a program which can be linked together with the program of the church for the upbuilding of the morals of the community through its recreation.

THE CHURCH AND COMMERCIALIZED RECREATION.  
THE GOSPEL OF PLAY.

Everybody knows that it is natural for children to play and that play has a marked influence upon the physical growth and moral character of the individual. But only the few realize that play is essential to every normal life and at every period of life. Play is defined as "An exercise or series of actions intended for amusement, diversion, or relaxation from work." Exercise may be physical, mental or a combination of both. Diversion suggests "that which pleasantly distracts the mind from cares or business". Amusement means "any form of pleasurable excitement or interest". Recreation is "diversion for the sake of refreshment or relaxation". In the use of the word "play" all of these different meanings are to be kept in mind.

Play is an end in itself. It is doing a thing for the sake of doing it. Work has reference to the result attained; hence, work is doing a thing for a reward. The same process may be employed in both work and play. For instance, when one plays for the sake of the game it is play, but when the interest centres in the stake or prize the same action ceases to be play and becomes work. Men who are making strenuous mental effort such as that required of railroad mail clerks in memorizing thousands of names of post offices and railroad lines, the times of trains and their connections, finds the best way to gain the result is through some form of play.

The play of the people is determined by the dispositions and demands of individuals and the opportunities offered for meeting these demands. Two girls and a little boy were busy one afternoon sailing shingle boats in a flooded gutter in the city of Baltimore. At one point they had gathered together a pile of stones and pieces of sticks. These were loaded upon their boats which were set adrift. Stopping at intervals down the gutter a portion of their cargo was discharged. When they reached the end of the run the boats were unloaded and carried back up stream where the process was repeated. This part of Baltimore is near the docks, in the city's most congested district. Within five blocks of their homes boats were being loaded and unloaded every day. They were thoroughly familiar with boats and water transportation. In Cheyenne a similar group of children would be throwing a

rope, building corrals, or imitating some of the other operations suggested by frontier civilization. Last summer the children at the sea-side resorts were building forts on the beaches and arming them with wooden cannon. It is a common complaint against the boys who play in the streets of our cities that they make themselves a nuisance to the police and the neighbors by climbing poles, window fronts, or anything else that is climbable, and by swinging on the awnings. Those who have philosophized over this tendency of boys to climb and hang by their arms say that it is a reversion to type and proves that man once lived in trees and was accustomed to swing himself from branch to branch. Whatever is to be said for this theory, one thing is surely true: the only reason the city boy does not climb a tree is because there is no tree at hand. He does the next best thing and uses the only opportunities for play that fortune has thrown in his pathway.

The deadly monotony of the common life of to-day with its incessant toil, its planning for the future, make a demand upon us to study the question of play and its relationship to life. Even though work be agreeable, yet there is need for occasional change and this need is as much psychological as physiological. The desire and need for play or relaxation continues with us and the question is how are we to meet the need and gratify the desire? Jand Addams' illustration of the kitten is a good one: "Suppose that after the kitten has practised mouse-catching and become proficient, it suddenly finds itself a grown-up cat in a city, where there are no mice to catch and where it has to live on canned mouse meat. To such a cat, living in a mouseless factory or office, nothing could give so much pleasure as the occasional use of its muscles along the traditional lines of mouse-catching, or in a game where skill stimulated mouse catching and which therefore made the same demand upon his alertness of eye and readiness of spring which mouse catching had made upon his long line of ancestors. Such a game would give to the city cat a sense of rest, of recreation, of restored well-being, of mental stimulation which nothing else in the world could possibly afford him." The actual fact is that most people live under conditions that are just about as strange and to which they are as little accustomed as this cat would be if made to live in a mouseless city.

As in the case of the kitten in the preceding story so it is, not only with the children of our cities, but the adults also, for men will "play" just so long as the instinct is in him as he will be but a machine, an automaton, if the instinct should, by any odd trick of Nature, be overthrown.

Man "plays" when he applies himself to those activities which are free and spontaneous and are pursued for their own sakes alone. The interest is self-developed and they are not continued under any internal or external compulsion. A large number of such activities have already been spoken of. These activities, let it be remembered, are volitional.

The term "work", on the other hand, includes all those activities in which, by means of sustained voluntary attention, one holds one's self down to a given task for the sake of some end to be obtained other than the activity itself. Such activities involve mental stress, strain, effort, tension, and concentration.

Right here might be asked how, according to the above definitions of work and play we shall classify that form of work which becomes so interesting as to be self-developing and requires no effort or attention to pursue it. A man may become so interested in his garden or in his inventions or in his professional pursuits that his work may take on the character of play. Nevertheless, this kind of activity requires the exercise of mental powers to a high degree of complexity and is far more fatiguing than play or sport as above defined. Even if this work be carried on in such a manner as to be recreational to a degree, still, the need for diversion is imperative as we shall see.

Looking at the matter physiologically it is very evident in the case of the adult that there are some brain tracts or some forms of "cerebral functionings" that are put under severe strain in our modern strenuous life and that there must be some kind of activity which will relieve these centres or tracts during a considerable portion of each waking day and involve other centers not so subject to exhaustion.

For our present purpose it does not matter what these centres are or what manner of "cerebral functioning" these may be. It is only necessary to note the evident fact that there is some kind of cerebral activity associated with those peculiar mental powers; and the development of which has made possible human progress.

Just what form the activity will take in its expression is a very important question. Often has the play spirit been the cause of disaster but trouble arises and play becomes a danger only when it is denied a legitimate form of expression. Take the words of Louise DE Koven Bowen in her work called "Safeguards for City Youth t Work and at Play:" From the very beginning it was obvious that the majority of children fell into difficulties through their search for recreation. In all of our towns and cities hundreds of young people, weary from their monotonous work in shop or factory, walk the streets in the evening imperiously asserting their right to pleasure. Business enterprise has taken advantage of this natural desire for recreation, and commercialized amusements have sprung up everywhere, prepared to cater to every taste of this childish multitude. Penny arcades, slot machines, moving picture shows, cheap theatres, amusement parks and dance halls are all attempting to attract children with every device known to modern advertising. Young people without protection are thus exposed to temptation at the very moment when they are least able to withstand it.

"One of the first cases brought to the attention of the Association was that of a young girl, arrested on the charge of stealing jewelry, who had closely imitated what she had seen in a moving picture theatre. The film showed a woman going into a jewelry store and asking to see some rings. She was chewing gum and, when an opportunity came, she took a ring and placed it in the gum which she had previously stuck underneath the counter. The ring of course was missed and a search made for it, but it was not found and the woman left the store. Shortly after a boy came and when he left he took with him the gum within which the ring was concealed. The spectator naturally said, "How easy!" but when the girl who was brought to the Association had tried it, she had been almost immediately arrested."

The danger attending the pursuit for pleasure is a chapter in itself and much is to be said of it but for the time being let it be said that there is a grave danger of which we cannot be ignorant and of these dangers and their connection with the commercialized recreation of the people we shall speak more in detail in chapter II.

Under the present heading, viz., "The Gospel of Play" it becomes necessary to say something of the relation of the church to amusement questions in general.

#### The Attitude of The Church.

The church is the most important factor in developing the character of individuals and upbuilding the moral forces of the community. There would always be religion in the world if there were no church, but without strong churches, religion would be so vague in its character as to be like the great churches of Russia: of but little value in bettering human condition.

All of human life depends directly upon its institutions and no radical change can be made without taking into account the influence of the institutions.

"Young ministers sometimes look upon the church as a necessary evil, an inherited incumbrance, a sort of device by which preachers are handicapped in their movements and held back from the largest usefulness. Men of this type are eager to get at what they call the world. Their desire is to reconstruct the social order and to do so on a broad scale. It is a blunder to ignore the church in an effort to reach the masses. It is a more serious blunder to slight the church in one's direct dealing with it." (Jefferson).

Granting the significance of the church and the importance of its position in the community life it is of great interest to know its attitude in this matter of the people's recreation. The community is the church's field of activity--the practical laboratory for its experiments and only as the community is made the kingdom of God, wherein transformed beings are to be developed, can the church be said to succeed. "Character says Graham Taylor, "is religion's greatest achievement and the instrumentality of all its accomplishments." "Character is helped or hindered in its development by the economic conditions surrounding the common life of to-day. The quest of the best is the ethical equivalent of the gospel doctrine of regeneration by the spirit!"--William De Witt Hyde.

Most of us must agree with Washington Gladden when he says "The historical relation of Christianity to popular amusements is one of antagonism. The church was not conspicuously cruel in depriving people of the things they enjoyed nor did it fail to appreciate the need for rest and relaxation.

"Granted a person needs rest and relaxation, let him take it as a sick man takes a pill or a dose of medicine. Recreation as a means of restoring life to its normal state of being was allowable and recognized as being good, but the kind of recreation was strictly defined. Amusement, as such, was looked upon as simply a pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake or a "plunging into pleasurable courses for the sake of personal enjoyment!" Everything that ministered to the "Joy of Living" was looked upon as sinful!

In this wholesale condemnation of amusements, no discrimination was made between what is good and what is bad. The prize fight and the parlor dance were put in the same category. Reading a novel, attending the theatre or the bull fight and playing cards were classed as sins and compared to the gladiatorial contests and drunken orgies of Nero's Rome. In this attitude of the church it was not only the thing done that was condemned, but the joy of the doing. A writer who strongly insists upon the essential evil of all the play and amusement out of which people get pleasure on the ground that it conduces to selfishness fails to see the superlative selfishness of this concluding statement of his impassioned article: "We came into the world not for sport. We were sent here on a higher and nobler charge. Let us not then forget this charge. Let us live and act in accordance with it, so that when summoned to meet our final judge we may hope to hear Him say 'Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'" I think it is fair to say that this represents the historical attitude of the church in general regarding the people's play. A popular evangelist said recently: "If you sow the card party you will reap the blackleg gambler. Eighty per cent. of the gamblers that have been wrecked and ruined acquired the habit in so-called Christian homes. If you sow the dance you reap prostitutes. The dance is the hot-bed of iniquity, and I denounce it as one of the rottenest, most hellish vice-producing institutions that ever

wriggled from the depths of perdition. It is not an innocent amusement; it is the very worst amusement. It has caused the downfall of more girls than anything else." In a revival held in a large city about one-fourth of the total population was reported as being converted. This meant that some eleven or twelve thousand people had quit going to the theatres, had burned their cards and had given up dancing. At the ensuing election the worst crowd that ever held office in the city's history was elected. Before the winter was over the theatres began to draw the crowds again, new cards were bought and the same round of dances and parties were at ended by the same people. There can be no question of the fact that the revival did stir impulses and goings of a kind in the community; but this question is a finer one, and we may raise it with propriety: "Was the standard of conversion which took away from the mass of the people their means of amusement a proper standard? Sober second thought seemed to lead the people of the community to believe that they had made a mistake in giving up these things. It would seem that nothing essential was lost, and that they could be good Christians and at the same time take part in the pleasures they enjoyed, providing, of course, that they did not allow these things to crowd out the more serious affairs of life.

The reason for the church's attitude toward the amusement question must be understood before we can make a constructive program for recreation today. In the first place let it be remembered that the conflict between the Christianity and Heathenism began in the arena of the people's play. Early Christians refused to join in the amusement of the people and for good reasons, too. The Roman Theatre in the time of the apostles was utterly bad, and the obscenity of the play was the popular part.

The circus and the gladiatorial contests were exciting to a brutal degree. The show was most enjoyed when the sands were dyed to a scarlet with the blood of horses and men--preferably men as the pathos of their dying anguish but added to the excitement. This craving for excitement is seen in the attitude of the people when in the fight between men and beasts--cheering wildly with their "thumbs turned down" indicating their wild desire for the blood of the victim, was an ulcer upon the face of humanity which no self-respecting institution could for a moment tolerate. Is it any wonder that the early Christians with the scene of Golgatha indelibly printed upon their minds--



a tragedy to them and all the world Divine--when the thirst for blood and the craving for excitement took the populace to see the suffering and death of one called Jesus of Nazareth; one in whom was no fault worthy of death; a just man and good: could they have thought well of amusement in their program for life? Never could they in those days use the term without the association which made them shudder. The recreation of the day was a useless garment and they cast it aside, for it was without virtue and had no place with them.

How much time we have spent over the question of amusements! We have asked over and over, the good--the harm--and the sinfulness of various known forms of popular amusement but the question is what is the church to do with the proposition of the people's play to-day? Admitted that false ideals of play, uncultured like a garden allowed to go to weeds, have brought many to reproach. Let us not turn aside from the question. False ideals in religion and in learning have led too many astray but we would never give these up as bad in themselves. So it is with the play instinct in life: "The weakness in the prevailing attitudes of the church is that it fails to recognize the insistence of social demands". The prime task of the church is to help establish a standard of recreation which will be democratic, uplifting, and constructive and the attitude of each church member should be "If failure to provide for the play of the people by means of playgrounds, social centres, and other recreational facilities makes my brother to offend, I will exert myself to favor and to work for the establishment of these things".

But we hear at once: What has the church to do with this matter for us, and is not the recreational field already crowded with the movie theatre, the drama, the musical comedy, the burlesque, and other numerous means for amusing the people? Right here we have failed to catch the point. We shall endeavor to see our mistakes in the following paragraphs.

## II COMMERCIALIZED RECREATION AND ITS RESULTS.

One need scarcely ask about the opportunities for amusement. A glance in any city newspaper gives an impression of the field from which our evenings entertainment might be chosen.

Probably the most conspicuous form and one of the most popular with the masses is the moving-picture theatre. It was estimated in 1912 that in the U.S. there were over ten thousand such houses with an annual patronage of over 4,000,000. In 1916 it was estimated that there were 17000 moving-picture houses with an annual attendance of 10,000,000 patrons. In the city of N.Y. it is said that one sixth of the population are "movie"-goers while the National Board of Censorship estimates the price of admission at \$319,000,000. Better expenditure is this than our yearly expenditure of \$3,223,000 by the men of the country for cigarettes. These theatres sell their seats at such a figure as to be within the reach of the masses. To the usual observer the recreation is such as to make one feel the evening well spent but, consider the situation for a period of time. Within such easy reach the young people develop such habits of attendance that it becomes their only means of recreation. In fact to many, the only possible means from an economic standpoint.

The survey of one town, New Britain, Conn. will serve as an example. Out of 350 pupils between the ages of 10 and 14 in one of the public schools there were 34 not allowed to attend the theatres at all; 183 were allowed to go once every week; 130 had the opportunity twice a week; 9 went every day, 3 of these sold papers and peanuts and soft drinks; 6 went 6 times each week. Of these 130 went alone; 20 only in the afternoon; and 75 went on Sundays. How these children obtained the pennies necessary for their admission is of itself an interesting study. Whether or not this attendance upon the theatre with such frequency is detrimental to the morals of the children, of course depends upon the picture itself. The whole problem is one of discrimination. The motion-picture theatre has done much to redeem the theatre because the best can be produced and offered for sale at a reasonable price. Is it any wonder that the moving-picture business as such has become so popular? One thing is to be said for the moving-pictures: it has supplanted the cheap and usually vile performance

of vaudeville which <sup>it</sup> was impossible to regulate, and which was the only amusement within the reach of the poorer people. It is the abuse of the theatre, not its use, that has given it the black eye and made it appear like a dangerous institution. Like any other institute the theatre has a right to be judged. Here as in any other form of amusement the church must inculcate good principles and so transform the tastes of the people that they will instinctively learn the things that are best, and will naturally turn from the vile and sensuous to the pure and helpful.

The work of the National Board of Censorship cannot be misjudged. This committee of whole souled people taken from various professions of life represent doctors, teachers, ministers, business men and women whose whole interest is to make the industry of film-making pure in its objectivity at least. For example, no portrayal of crime is allowed to be pictured for the sake of the crime itself, and always an attempt is made to make the standard of retribution appear as a result of crime. This element may often be very little emphasized, but the principal is there. Murder scenes and fights are not allowed to be drawn out for any great length of time. This is a decided step in advance of the conditions a few years ago when, for example, "The Gypsy's Revenge" prolonged the fate of a pedlar who fell into their hands,--a whole film, or 15 minutes run on the screen, was devoted to the portrayal of his agonies as he was tortured by the maniac gypsies--tortured beyond measure--sawn asunder and dangled over a cleft where a "close up" showed the vultures gruesomely engaged with the "last rites!" Such appeal to the indecent and gross in human nature would be to-day a misdemeanor punishable by law.

Next to the moving-picture come the dances and of this form of amusement but little can be said with regard to the number of people participating therein. The dance, as such, will here be discussed. The love of dancing is natural to every individual. Nearly every art to-day has developed out of the dance in one of its forms. ~~no new~~

The inherent love of rhythm is the fundamental element in dancing. This is expressed in the plays and games of children. When they are happy they hop and skip about in merry fashion, clapping their hands and singing in perfect rhythm. When one is ill he

loses the rythm of life. In our formal dancing the simple movements of children have been amplified and repeated in definite form of rotation with definite changes and variations often with a childlike expression of joy. "Dancing originated in the religious instincts, and was a form of religious service and is still capable of teaching awe, reverence, worship." The love of God is just as capable of motor expression as is romantic love."--G.S.Hall.

The Jews as well as other early nations had their sacred dances which were performed at holiday seasons and on solemn occasions. Social dancing as we understand it was unknown in ancient times. In the Bible the references lead us to conclude any occasion might be celebrated with a dance--the Prodigal's return; the success of an army; celebration of some event in history; welcoming of strangers and reception of a hero. On the occasion of the passage of the Red Sea, Miriam, the sister of Moses, "took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went after her with timbrels and with dancing." Modern interpreters might add for their purposes "with dancing partners" but to all appearances these dances were solos in unison as are practised now with some modifications in oriental countries. The American Indians had their snake dance, medicine dance, witch dance, and various other dances each of which had a definite purpose. In most of the ancient dances the sexes danced separately.

The dance is a favorite amusement with the American people. At present it is in vogue to a tremendous extent. Dance halls are crowded. The vaudeville betwween pictures in many a theatre consists of singing and dancing while the diversion between courses in restaurants and hotels is the same. Dancing schools are doing the best business in their history.

Commercialism has been quick to see its opportunity and in every city and town young men and women are being exploited to their ruin because it is profitable for a group of men to furnish the opportunities for dancing, and because good people of the community have withheld themselves, their guiding hands, and the protecting influence so much needed.

The latest dances have a doubtful reputation largely because of the places and conditions where they first become popular. The danger here rises from the fact that there is here the sex appeal. These new forms of the dance allow greater liberty, and as

ordinarily danced are not so artistic as their older and more stately relations. To make the difference clear one needs only to witness a crowd of people dancing the tango and the same crowd dancing a quadrille. Because the new dance steps are more difficult to learn only few people dance correctly. In the halls where the one-step is allowed hardly a couple really dances, for the most part they slip, slide, dip, and walk about over the floor; thus is given a greater opportunity for familiarity and this familiarity has often degenerated into coarse and vulgar indecencies. It is the vulgarity and its results upon the moral life of young people that brings the dance into disrepute. "Dancing is the expression of feeling by means of motion. The moral danger lies in the thought behind the motion and the conditions under which feeling is given expression." In determining the value of the dance and the consequent attitude of the church regarding it, it would be wise, as Washington Gladden points out, to consider a few general principles;

'Amusement is not an end, but the means to an end. When it begins to be the principal thing for which one lives, or when in pursuing it the mental powers are enfeebled and the bodily health impaired, it falls under just condemnation.

'Amusements which consume the hours which ought to be sacred to sleep are censurable.

'Amusements that call us away from work that we are bound to do are pernicious just to the extent to which they cause us to be neglectful or unfaithful.

'Amusements that arouse or stimulate morbid apprehensions or unlawful passions, or cause us to be restless or discontented are to be avoided.

'Any indulgence in amusement which has a tendency to weaken our respect for the great interests of life or to loose our hold on the eternal verities of the spiritual realm is so far fraught with danger to us.'

These principles apply to all kinds of amusements, and by them we can judge of the moral value of every form of play. The dance, instead of being the great evil it has been so often pictured, might easily be made an adjunct in the development of the truest and best type of life. This means that the love of the dance must be given a chance to express itself under better conditions than are now possible to the average individual. In such books as 'From the Ballroom to

to Hell', and in a great deal of the preaching against amusements that fortunately was more common a few years ago than it is today, statements such as these were made: "Of the 500,000 lost women in our country, 370,000 went to hell through the dance." It is easy to see that such statements are not based upon definitely ascertained facts, and that they cast a heavy reproach upon the moral natures of young people. Undoubtedly, the dance has contributed its share of young men and women, but it was the dance under the worst possible conditions. Christian judgment will demand that before tabooing the whole subject and relegating to outer darkness all young people who love to dance, we examine the motives, take stock of the kind of opportunities for dancing, and then make an effort to meet whatever problem is raised by our study.

"It is argued that when people begin to dance everything else has to take second place. This brings up another question. Dancing makes its strongest appeal at a certain stage in the life of a girl and boy. It is like an attack, like measles, through which every youth has to pass. Older people dance and enjoy it; to them dancing is simply an incident, while many boys and girls in their teens make dancing the end of life. How are we to inculcate the principles that will bring about the proper balance? The common way has been to say 'No, don't dance.' The young people have gone ahead and danced just the same, and having danced against the wishes of the church, they have lost their interest in the church. 'Dancing and piety very seldom go together' is a common saying, but it was piety that first sought a separation from the dance. When the more serious things of life come in and other interests intrude themselves, dancing, like all other forms of play, naturally falls into its proper place. The attitude for the church to take in regard to dancing is one of sympathetic interest; it should speak plainly and boldly concerning its dangers; point out how easily this innocent amusement may become evil; and proclaim the proper balance between work and play. The church ought not to condemn dancing as such, but it is well within its province to show that there are more than one or two ways for the people to lay. When this has been done, instead of holding aloof, it is the duty of the church in every place to see that good laws are enacted regulating the dance

and the dance halls; that the legislation is rigidly enforced, and that the public dance halls and other places of amusement are honestly inspected by order of the municipal government. This done, many of the abuses growing out of the dance will be eliminated. Then it remains for the church to help provide other and more wholesome forms of play which will appeal to all classes.

Among other centers which serve the recreational instinct of certain of the people there must be considered that one institution which we are loath to admit has any purpose in the community at all--namely the saloon. The saloon from the economic standpoint is a place on a par with the butcher, the baker, and candlestick maker in that its owner or operator is in the business for the purpose of making money. He is there for the purpose of making profit and the greatest possible profit of course. If he fulfills any other mission to the community he does so because it results naturally from his real business. If he consciously supplies any other demand than that, he perceives its commercial value and seizes upon it in order to increase the amount of his sales. In this cold economic respect the saloon is no more a benevolent institution than is the grocery store. The idea that the saloon keeper is disinterestedly performing any social service must be set aside at once.

Just as the saloon keeper looks always at the selling of his liquors, so his patron is there primarily to buy them. If it were not for the patron who comes only to drink, the saloon could not exist. It may be that other things go with the drinking; that these become known and sought for what they are and for what they can give; that they become even the primary attraction for many saloon patrons. But the craving for liquor is what makes the saloon. The proof of this lies in the failure of prohibition to destroy the craving for drink. If it were anything less than this upon which the saloon rested it might easily be abolished.

Primarily, the saloon answers to the demand for liquor but it goes beyond this and supplies a deeper and more subtle want than mere animal thirst. This want is the demand for social expression, and how it is met becomes clear by noting what elements are needed to create what we call a social centre. Among these elements are to be mentioned absence of any time limit,

some stimulus to self-expression, and a kind of personal feeling toward those into whose company one is thrown, which tempts one to put away reserve and enjoy their society. Where these three elements coexist, however imperfectly, they create a social centre, a situation, that is, in which the social instincts find their natural expression.

"Such a centre the saloon evidently is, even in its lowest forms, for the elements which create a social centre are parts of the very nature and constitution of the saloon as such. In a saloon there is no time limit. Loafing is not prohibited, and there are no placards telling men to move on. The saloon-keeper is anxious to have a man stay if it seems, as it usually does, that he will spend more money. Only when he has no more money to spend, or his presence has become obnoxious will he be asked to leave. The stimulus to sociability is present irrespective of the quality of the liquor and the attractiveness of the saloon. There is no means of arousing the social instinct so sure as that which lies within the reach of the poorest man. An expense of five cents will put him at any time into what we may call a social temper. The saloon is warm in winter, and as cool as any other place in summer. The liquor is hot when the weather is cold and cold when the weather is hot. The stimulus is calculated nicely to meet just the social end. Best of all he meets his fellows, and is met by them in the direct and personal way that breaks down the reserve, and causes at once the springs of his social nature to act. The saloon is the most democratic of institutions. It appeals at once to the common humanity of man. There is nothing to repel. No questions are asked. Respectability is not a countersign. The doors swing open before any man who chooses to enter. Once within he finds the atmosphere one in which he can allow his social nature freely to expand. The welcome from the keeper is a personal one. The environment is congenial. It may be that the appeal is to what is base in him. He may find his satisfaction because he can give vent to those lower desires which seek expression. The place may be attractive just because it is so little elevating. Man is taken as he is, and is given what he wants, be that want good or bad. The only standard is the demand. There is evidently no room for argument here. Persons may disagree in their opinions as to the ethical value of the sa-



loon, as to the extent to which the saloon ministers to the social needs of the community, but it can hardly be denied that even if it be the demand for drink, and that alone, which brings a man to a saloon, the saloon patron finds himself when he enters in a centre peculiarly adapted to the free expression of his social nature.

Here, then, is a social phenomenon to be studied wholly apart from ethical considerations. It may be a good thing or a bad thing that such opportunities exist. With this we are not for the moment concerned. What interests us now is simply that the opportunity is there. It is not a question whether a man is injured more than he is benefited. The fact to be studied is that he finds in the saloon the answer to a social demand. The saloon is so related in our minds with the question of morals that it is hard to look at it merely as a social institution, hard to assess it correctly upon the basis of precise observation without allowing our preconceived notions of its ethical value to influence our judgment. An unbiased study of the saloon as it exists in our American cities, under many differing laws and in its many different forms, compels the conclusion that it is acting to-day as a social centre, even where this purpose is furthest from the mind of its keeper, and where its apparent attractiveness is reduced to its lowest terms.

Upon closer examination, the importance of this result only increases, and the real hold of the saloon upon the social life of the people becomes more and more clear. It is apparent for one thing that there are not many centres of recreation and amusement open at all hours to the working people, none that minister to their comfort in such a variety of ways. The longer one searches for just the right kind of a substitute for the saloon, affording its conveniences without its evils, the more one despairs of finding it. And yet such places are a positive necessity, for the social instinct that demands and finds its satisfaction within the saloon is a reality. Work is not and was not meant to be the whole of life. The leisure problem equals in importance the labor problem, and surpasses it in difficulty. Our present-day social philosophers are searching for a solution of this problem. In the meantime, to satisfy the social needs of thousands of our laboring people, stands the saloon ready to welcome them, and admirably adapted to such an end.

How admirably, a short study of some representative types of saloons will easily show us:

"Even in the lowest kinds of saloons there is a kind of social life present. These places may be positively immoral, where all the adjectives of the temperance rhetorician apply literally. Unfortunately, even such saloons as these are not the less for all this, centres of social expression. To say this is not to say a word in their defense. The fact is simply recorded. Social desires may be depraved; they are none the less real, and that their expression gives relief and satisfaction cannot for a moment be doubted. The saloon becomes in this case the conduit through which pass off the lowest forms of social life. The men who patronize these places are ex-convicts or embryo-criminals; men whose tastes and habits are the lowest. Often the mental and physical activities of such men as these find outlet in acts of positive violence and disorder."

Yet grimy and unpleasant as such a place may appear to the passer-by who may not be able to see why men should desire to spend their time in these low class saloons where the opportunity for social expression, it still remains to be said that here is a distinct social life being provided by the saloon in spite of itself. Study the character of the man who frequents such a place, see him in his ill-fitting and besmeared clothes, uniformly unkept, ~~inground~~ *unimproved*, and with a shiftlessness that is deplorable, and sigh for his condition, then imagine him in the back seat of a church or prayer meeting room and you sense an odd feeling of misplacement--he is not in natural surroundings and he is not in a mood for expressing himself at all. Go to his home and here we find not infrequently a squalid room in some tenement house where the fixtures, if indeed there be such luxuries at all, are battered and broken, a room littered with dirt, and uncleanness in all its displendor in apparent authority, and you have in general the condition which make a lock-up or a dingy beer-cellar seem like an asylum for the escape from the drudgery of work and the hand of the police. This man was born in dirt and is not afraid of it. What he wants, what he needs is sociability. What he must have is sociability. What he will have is sociability, and where else can it be had other than around the block at a greasy table in some cheap saloon. To him the atmosphere is congenial, and to him and many others this particular type of saloon provides a social center.

Moreover that the social possibilities to be gained in the saloon are the only factors entering into a discussion of its existence is far from an accurate putting of the case. One of the problems which has been definitely set for psychologists to solve during is the cause for the almost universal desire for alcohol. "Why men use alcohol?" is a question the answer to which we may seek in vain in the hosts of paper and magazine articles given over to the subject of temperance. The belief that the desire for alcohol is due to total depravity or to original sin seems to be as far as we have got in answering the question. One writer in a recent article attributed the cause

largely to bad cooking at home. We would not be understood as saying that the cause is due either directly or indirectly to the lack of proper social expressional activities, for the desire for alcohol as well as its use is as old as the lake-dwellers of the Neolithic Age.

We are astonished when we think of the vast amount of work accomplished by the wholehearted and soulful workers of the temperance cause in its relation to the actual decrease of the consumption of alcohol. In the U. S. the people are consuming annually about 200,000,000 gallons of malt liquor, a decrease since 1907 of but 30/100 of a gallon per capita, and yet the Temperance cause has added continually to its constituency, whole territories and states on the "dry" side. The cost of producing this amount is an item of interest, viz., six hundred million dollars--almost the same figures as that of our wheat crop: What part is the church to play in turning this vast expenditure into the production of food stuffs in this year of our Lord 1917 when there is less food in the world than ever before in the last 200 years?

To return to our main subject it would seem a priori improbable that anything so profoundly desired should not conform to some real need of the human organism. An investigation has been completed, the results of which serve our purpose here in very brief form:

1. It is not desired on account of its food value.
2. It is not desired as a stimulant.
3. It is not desired as a muscle builder.
4. It is not desired as a mental contributant.

Now therefore the partaker cannot prove the premises

of any of these arguments to himself but he does know that while under the influence of alcohol he becomes a free man from the care of the world and from the deadly monotony of sobriety. His daily drudgery passes from his view, his fatigue, his worry, his fear, anxiety and to some extent his physical pain are at last in the relaxation of the narcotizing of his higher sensibilities. We read this in the lines of Gasta Berling: "The year had dragged itself out in heavy gloom. Peasant and master had passed their days with thoughts of the soil but at even-time their spirits cast off their yoke, freed by brandy. Inspiration came, the heart grew warm, life became glowing, the song rang out, roses shed their perfume. The public house bar-room seemed to him a tropical garden, grapes and olives hung down over his head, marble statues shone among dark leaves, songsters and poets wandered under the palms and trees." A most appropriate quotation snatched at random is that of Tennyson in the "Psalm of Life"-- "Things are not what they seem" to the man thus stupefied by alcohol.

Here is the demand for joy, for relaxation, for relief from pain and though it serves the purpose for the moment such a means to the end is distressingly popular.

The psychical forces are most subject to fatigue and cannot be used continuously during all our waking hours. During sleep they enjoy almost perfect rest. Nature seems to demand during a considerable part of our waking hours some form of activity which shall afford rest to these higher mental powers. To such a condition we apply the term relaxation. It is typified most perfectly in sport and play, but includes many other forms of human interest such as the enjoyment of music, art, the drama, fiction, etc. Relaxation is necessary and in the early history of the race it was discovered that other means could furnish relaxation, artificial to be sure, but quick, easy, and convenient. We need not give an historic account of these artifices; alcohol is the predominant one we have to deal with to-day. It is right here that the whole question of the saloon relates itself to the problem of recreation and by the saloon we include the allied vice, graft, and gambling interests. The saloon has commercialized an element in man's nature which the church has been slow to recognize. We have been aware that the saloon business is a disgrace and a curse.

We have wished it away but where is the institution to take its place? Merely to suppress the sale of alcohol is like putting a lid on a teakettle to prevent the steam from escaping. As long as the fire burns beneath and there is water in the kettle something will happen to the lid. If the lid is put on tight something will happen to the kettle. We must provide some way for the steam to escape or else remove the fire. So we, the church, must provide some substitute for alcohol, such as healthful forms of relaxation, or else by a different kind of education or a different manner of social life bring about such a harmony in the human personality as to make unnecessary the resort to temporary expedients.

## II THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH.

The most important task of the church is the re-creation of the play life of the people. Various agencies and institutions have arisen for the purpose of creating a new conscience in regard to play and a new opportunity for its development.

The Fussell Sage Foundation, which was incorporated in 1907, has for its purpose "the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America". The first undertaking of this organization was to provide for the play of children by establishing playgrounds in conjunction with the efforts already being put forth by the Playground Association. When the latter named organization secured the necessary funds, the Foundation applied its energies to research work with a view to publicity and to a study of special recreational problems. The total expenditures for this purpose amounted to \$570,223.81. There are 6,314 workers employed who are giving full time to directing the play. The Association has brought out a general recognition throughout our country of the fact that every community needs play centres that shall be open for the entire year, and these centres to be under the supervision of one person appointed by the city who shall have general charge, as has the city school superintendent.

Having said so much about the progress of these agencies for better recreation we still must ask ourselves the question, What must the church do? Where can it best fit into the life of the community with regard to recreation? Public opinion must be depended upon in every community to establish a standard of conduct. But it is true that often opinions are founded upon too few facts and most judgments are small and narrow. Public opinion must be educated to view the needs and demands of the entire community, and to recognize that whatever happens of an objectionable nature in the pursuit of pleasure might easily have happened in any other pursuit. That it did happen in connection with one's play—the play must be separated from the cause of the objection. Therefore we say with Joseph Lee: "Let us not be too fearful or negative. Life, upon the whole, is good not bad. It was made for living not to be cast aside. The mutual attraction of boy and girl that has in it a great part of interest and beauty of our lives is not a power to be decried or fought against." The idea of long ago that "all men are conceived and born in sin" and "through Adam all have sinned" may be of theological interest to some old

fossils who would see children barred from pleasure and subjected to the rule of puritanic tyranny, with faces of old men and women out of due time, such an idea of childlife is obsolete. Childlife has a charm which we miss in after life, and miserable is the man who is not conscious of the fact that he has missed his chance. Your life is waiting to express itself. What form shall the expression take? Who shall say? The dance hall manager, the theatre man or the saloon keeper? Too long the attitude of the church has been that of repression. No other institute can better form the opinion of the public as to the proprieties of the expressional play life of the young in the community. To do this work of education the church must know the field in which it is to work. It must know the facilities for recreation, the character of these facilities, where they are, and who are they that avail themselves of these opportunities. This study must include the whole situation, not one phase of it. This is best accomplished by cooperating with other forces in the community already doing the work. Having gained the facts, a constructive plan or program may be laid out. The facts will vary in different communities, but invariably "it will be found" says Rowland Haynes "that from 50% to 75% of the play life is haphazard" and being without direction is an easy prey to the commercial amusement manager's unscrupulousness.

Having made a survey of the recreation needs of such a given community and having succeeded in the formation of public opinion in regard to the facts, the next stage is the crystalization of this public opinion into law and law enforcement. These laws however, must take into consideration the varied character of communities and the different characteristics of human nature. To quote Joseph Lee again: "Human virtue it seems is like a hotel blanket; when you cover your feet it comes off your shoulders. When you feel that you are too decolleté for comfort and that the higher interests are being neglected, you pull it up over your neck and it comes off your feet. Naturally human nature revolts against the cold. So the race has alternated between license and Puritanism. We must stretch our virtue till it will cover human nature as it is."

Responsibility for conditions in theatres, dance-halls, pool-rooms and the like should be placed squarely upon the shoulders of some one official in the depart-

ment of municipal affairs. Inasmuch as this is a community affair the rules and regulations should be those that the community has sanctioned and is willing to have enforced. Regulations as to the buildings to be used as recreational centres in any way should be brought to the "community attention." These should include regulations as to fire laws, ventilation, sanitary facilities, lighting, and <sup>the buildings</sup> should be physically fit and clean in every respect. Furthermore, closing hours and a time limit should be a matter of careful consideration.

Piety enforcement must go with the law and this can be accomplished through the "community conscience." It is the prime duty of the church to make men and women better. As in individual life this cannot be done until the conscience is quickened, so in community life the conscience must be reached. No other institution has a better field for the development of the community conscience than the church.

In 1910 on the National Holiday, July 4, there were 5,600 serious accidents while innocent children were just celebrating the day in a haphazard way. Last year the serious accidents reported could almost be counted on the fingers of both hands. What is the secret? The danger of undirected celebration was brought to the attention of our National consciences--the use of fireworks regulated, and programs and pageantry introduced as a substitute, and good substitutes these prove to be when properly directed.

What the church can do in its community is local, to be sure, but other agencies are at work upon a wider scale which reflect upon the various communities. The moving picture theatre can be regulated only as to its fitness as a place of amusement,--the character of its pictures are judged elsewhere, to wit the National Board of Censorship:

"The Board prohibits obscenity in all forms; vulgarity when it offends or when it verges toward indecency, unless an adequate moral purpose is served. It prohibits the representation of crime in such detailed way as may teach the methods of committing crime, except as <sup>in</sup> the judgment of the Board the representation serves as a warning to the whole public; morbid scenes of crime where the only value of the scene is in its morbidity or criminal appeal are excised. Nevertheless the Board cannot judge films exclusively from the standpoint of children or delicate women, of the emotionally morbid, or of any one class



of audience. But it does take into consideration as one of the controlling motives governing it the fact that possibly 25% of the total motion picture audience is made up of children under sixteen.

The Board prohibits the unnecessary elaboration or prolongation of scenes of suffering, brutality, vulgarity, violence or crime; prohibits blasphemy, by which is understood the careless, wanton or unnecessary offense against religious susceptibilities of any large number of people in the country; anything obviously or wantonly libelous in films; anything calculated to cause injury to persons or interests from an obviously malicious or libelous motive, and films dealing with questions of fact which relate to criminal cases pending in the courts.

The Board does not enforce on motion pictures simply its own virtues of what is desirable and right. Rather it tries to eliminate its own personal equation completely. The general conscience of the country believes in free speech on religious and political matters; in the right of the people to live and enjoy themselves in the way they see fit so long as fundamental morality is not injured; to insure a certain amount of freedom both to speech, to art and to conduct is a part of the conscience of the country as much as to forbid obscene and demoralizing speech and art and to prevent destructive actions.

The Board does not regard itself as a Censor of tastes, unless it is clear that the question of taste is an essentially moral one. Nor does it regard itself as a censor of accuracy unless the inaccuracy in question is of a libelous kind or will result in some concrete disaster to the person whom the inaccuracy misleads."

Last year 7,570 reels of motion pictures were inspected by this Board. These represented 5,740 subjects and 8,098,246 feet of motion pictures. Out of these 53 subjects were wholly condemned; 401 were condemned partially, so that cuts had to be made in the reels. In this way 12,030 feet of film were eliminated. This loss to the manufacturers amounted to \$115,909.50. It is interesting to know that the film manufacturing companies cooperate heartily with the National Board and very seldom is there any question raised as to its decisions. The motion picture concerns of the country have found that decency pays.

We have left unsaid any attempt to deal with the saloon as an institution of commercial recreation

What can be done with this ulcer of society is the inevitable conclusion of every thinking man, viz. "to consign it to the diabolic region where it belongs" and apply the funds, the grain used in distilling, the real estate of the breweries to the conservation of society regardless of the cost. As a recreational centre it meets the demand of but a few, and if need be these must perish with their idol in order that future generations may be free from its curse.

The church's business, above everything else, is the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth. Toward this purpose let her ever stand making use of all agencies that can properly contribute to the salvation of men's lives, and with righteous abhorrence let her fight against those forces which degrade and dehumanize them.

The church has no sympathy with the saloon. To regulate its activity she has no energy to spend, but her whole life is for the abolition of the business. The great blow<sup>she</sup> can wield in addition to the substitution of clubs, societies, organizations, entertainments, free lunches, moving pictures, picnics, excursions, and what not, is to be found in her great mission of bringing to the world the pragmatic gospel of regeneration. Regeneration in Play--Regeneration in social and business life--Regeneration in the individual life--but the greatest of these is the regeneration of the individual life. Having accomplished this task the rest is easy.

But now we see not all things regenerated. To the men and women who are at work in bringing the Kingdom to the child life of our country through the channels of play--God speed!

"Economists have been trying for a long time to discover how best to employ the energies of men. Ah, if I could but discover how best to employ their leisure! Labor in plenty there is sure to be. But where look for recreation? The daily work provides the daily bread, but laughter gives it savor. Oh, all you philosophers! Begin the search for pleasure! Find for us if you can amusements that do not degrade, joys that uplift. Invent a holiday that gives every one pleasure, and makes none ashamed."--Emile Souvestre: "Un Philosophe sous les Toits."