



The
Catherine Booth
Collection

HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

PART III: FOLLOWING THE HIGHWAY CODE

CHAPTER THREE: Christianity and the Drink Traffic

A SUBJECT upon which I have been requested to write is: The value of temperance in connection with religious aggressive effort. It may be well to explain that we understand religious aggressive effort to be that interference on the part of Christians with the thoughts and actions of ungodly men which the Bible shows to be necessary in order to secure their present and eternal well-being.

We Christians see around us everywhere men and women under the influence of false ideas, given up to selfish indulgences and evil practices which enslave their faculties and render real happiness impossible. Religious aggressive effort implies measures taken for their deliverance from these evil habits into the liberty, power and blessedness of the family of God. It is, in short, a holy warfare, prosecuted under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, to bring men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.

The very nature of Christianity renders this aggressive effort incumbent on all Christians. A fundamental principle underlying the whole economy of grace is that the truly regenerate will be benevolently active for the good of others. I am aware that there is a great deal of professed Christianity which lacks this lineament of the divine likeness. An inspired apostle, however, declares that there is something greater even than faith, which is charity. The faith which is of the operation of the Spirit 'worketh by love', and ever leads its possessor to follow Him who went about doing good.

The cause and strength of a large proportion of the wickedness, crime, vice and misery which exist is the use of intoxicating drink as a beverage.

With this proposition many of us are sadly too familiar. The baneful harvest of crime and misery which its consumption has entailed has opened the eyes of almost every thinking and patriotic mind to the fact that the drink, not the abuse of it alone, but the drink itself, is an evil thing, and there is overwhelming evidence that it is the natural ally of all wickedness. The gambler seeks it to aid him in the craft and cunning by which he lures his victim on to financial ruin. The seducer has recourse to its deceptive power to pave the way for his cruel licentiousness. The burglar braces his courage and hardens his conscience by its exhilarating fumes. The harlot drowns in the intoxicating cup her sense



The
Catherine Booth
Collection

HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

of shame, and from it gathers strength to trample out the deepest, tenderest instincts of womanhood.

Christians are bound to aggress on the kingdom of Satan, and if strong drink constitutes one of the mightiest forces of that kingdom then it follows that to be successful in aggressive effort Christians must deal with the drink. Doubtless one reason for the Church's failure in aggressive measures has been her ignoring of the power of this great adversary. Alas! That Christians have been so slow to learn its power as a mitrailleuse of Hell. Thank God, some of them are beginning to appreciate it and are crying, 'How shall we deal with the drink?' In the name of Christ and humanity deal with it as you do with all other soul-ruining abominations. Wash your hands of it once and for ever. All other ways that have been tried have come to nought. The time has come for Christians to denounce the use of intoxicating drinks as irreligious and immoral.

The attempt to make what is termed the moderate use of strong drink consistent with a profession of religion has signally and ignominiously failed; and the common sense of mankind is turning upon those who have made it with these most pertinent questions. How can that which produces all this crime and misery be a good thing, and if it be an evil thing, how can it be moderately used? This question comes with overwhelming force to those who labour for the spiritual benefit of mankind. At every step the drink difficulty meets them, and it must be met and grappled with.

Abstinence is valuable as a source of strength to those who are called to make aggressive religious effort. No man constrained by divine love for the good of others can deny himself without improving his own moral nature and giving increased scope for the operation of the divine Spirit within him.

Abstinence is valuable to the Christian labourer as a safeguard against temptation. The man who never uses it can never fall through its influence. He is safe thus far because he goes not into temptation.

Abstinence is valuable to the labourer, because it helps to beget in the minds of those whom he seeks to benefit a conviction of his disinterestedness which is indispensable to his success. Doubtless the unwillingness of religious teachers to forgo their own indulgence in the use of wine and spirits has greatly diminished their influence with numbers of the common people. If the gospel is to make any great advance on the masses, those who seek to propagate it must abandon the use of drink. As Dr. Guthrie remarks, 'I am convinced that it is the duty of every man who would do his



The
Catherine Booth
Collection

HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

utmost for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures, to discountenance by his example the use of intoxicating stimulants.' Consider further the value of abstinence to those on whom the Christian has to aggress. It is indispensable as a pioneer in reaching the drunkard. The motives, arguments and persuasions of the gospel are addressed to the reason, conscience and feelings of men, and presuppose a sane mind. Everybody knows that it is useless to present these to a man when he is intoxicated; therefore with thousands who live in a perpetual state of intoxication the only chance of salvation is to rescue them from the drink. Drunkenness is a physical as well as a moral disease, and if we would remove it we must proceed on the same principle as we do with the insane—restore the reason before we can sanctify the heart. Some of our Christian friends object to this and say, 'Then it is the gospel and total abstinence.' Emphatically yes, just as in the case of a lunatic or a man raving in a fever, it is the gospel and the physician.

We would ask those who object to the use of abstinence as instrumental in saving the drunkard what plan they would suggest for his restoration. The plan hitherto adopted has been simply to leave him to his fate. While giving countenance and patronage to the drink which has made him what he is, they have left him in his helplessness and misery to sink into a drunkard's hell. It is significant that rarely do non-abstainers care for the drunkard. We believe that pioneering work to reach the drunkard and bring him under the influence of the gospel ought to be done by Christians, but until Christian ministers and people will forgo their own indulgence and undertake the labour of hunting down the drunkard, let those do it who will, for any man has a better chance of salvation when sober than he has when drunk.

Total abstinence is valuable in separating men from those associations and habits which prevent them from hearing the gospel. It is also an ally of the gospel because it tends to keep the intellect and conscience awake to the perception of divine truth. Again, abstinence is an ally of the gospel as a conserving power. We must not only aggress on the kingdom of darkness, but must use every means to keep the spoils. When the evil spirit is cast out we must do our utmost to keep him out, or the last state of our convert will be worse than the first.

When a man under the influence of the Holy Spirit is brought to see himself a sinner and led to embrace the Saviour, he should be taught that he has only just entered on his heavenward course and must cast aside every hinderance, keep his body under, watch and pray, and avoid temptation. With those who have been addicted to intemperance there is no hope of their standing fast without the entire abandonment of the drink. Our Lord taught his disciples to pray to be kept out of



The
Catherine Booth
Collection

HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

temptation. Again and again we are warned and enjoined to keep ourselves out, and on this condition all His promises of grace and deliverance are suspended. God has nowhere promised to keep the man who needlessly and for his own indulgence runs into temptation.

Not only is abstinence indispensable to preserve those who have been rescued out of the power of this great destroyer, but it is equally valuable to prevent others from falling into it. We all profess to believe that prevention is better than cure. Seeing then that strong drink is a most dangerous foe to perseverance in righteousness, and a most potent cause of declension, inconsistency and apostasy, ought not Christians to strive by example and precept to warn the young, the weak and the inexperienced against touching it? Can any man answer for the consequences of putting a bottle to his neighbour's mouth, be it ever such a small one, or ever such a genteel one? God has recorded His curse against the man who does this, and thousands of hoary-headed parents, brokenhearted wives and weeping, blighted children groan their amens to the dreadful sentence.

But suppose some people could take drinks without hurting themselves; will they dare answer for their children? Thousands of parents connected with the various churches are sinking in sorrow to the grave through the intemperance of sons and daughters who first acquired a taste for drink by sipping out of their own glasses, never used but in moderation! I ask, Was not the curse of God on the liquor rather than on the size of the glass which contained it? And might not these parents have known that if they sowed the wind they must reap the whirlwind? I would say to Christian parents as you value your children's happiness and chastity, their godliness in this life and their felicity in the next, save them from acquiring a taste for drink. Christian ministers, deacons, elders, members, warn your young people not to look on drink, nor enter the outermost circle of this eddying maelstrom of perdition, crimsoned already with the blood of myriads once as fair and pure, as virtuous and true, as they are themselves.

By your peace of conscience on a dying bed; by the eternal destinies of your children; by your concern for the glory of God; by your care for never-dying souls; by the love you owe your Saviour; I beseech you, banish the drink. Banish it from your tables, banish it from your houses.

Have no fellowship with those who get rich by robbing man of his reason, woman of her virtue, and children of their patrimony and their bread. Cease to recognize not only as Christians, but as men, those who fatten on the weakness, wickedness and suffering of their fellow-men. Hoist the flag of death over their breweries, distilleries and dram-shops, warning the unwary that death and



The
Catherine Booth
Collection

HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

damnation lurk behind their finely-decorated bars, and run like the lurid fires of perdition through their brightly-polished taps. To trim on this drink question is the highest treason to the cause of Christ, and the grossest inhumanity to suffering, perishing millions.

But, say some of our Christian friends, we must have patience. We answer, we have had long patience.

The times of ignorance both God and man were willing to wink at, but we declare that the time for patience has passed. Arise, Christians, and fight this foe! You, and you alone, are able, for your God will fight for you! Come to His help against this mighty champion of Hell, and He will empower you to lay him low, and take all his armour wherein he has trusted.