



Lady Temperance by Dr. Chris Swanson

I suspect we all have reacted at some time or another to our culture's obsession with bodily appetites: sex, food, drink, pleasure, and so forth. I know I have. That reaction got me thinking about the role of appetites and temperance.

Lady Temperance has been given a bad rap. We think she's old-fashioned, passé. We picture a severe, turn-of-the-twentieth-century farmer's wife or a prohibitionist, one of those muddle-headed, do-gooding zealots who in their ignorance did more harm than good. If those images were the extent of our negative feelings toward poor old Temperance, we might just pat her on the head and leave her be. But we no longer smile patiently on Temperance as if she were a senile relative whom we're fond of but don't take seriously. Rather, Lady Temperance has become the antithesis of personal freedom and self-expression, and we no longer tolerate her. We must stamp her out, obliterate her. She no longer stands on the sidelines; she is enemy number one.

Because she has been relegated to the dust bin of history, perhaps it would be useful to remind ourselves of who she is. Lady Temperance is the champion of moderation in the satisfaction of the physical appetites. She does not forbid the satisfaction of those appetites. She does not label them as foul, evil, or sinful. She recognizes them as a part of our humanity, a part that, in the proper context, can be used for the noble and the good. Temperance does not demean bodily appetites, but she does encourage us to weigh those appetites against other important values

and activities. Temperance encourages us most of all to exercise self-control and to prioritize the importance of the physical against the social, mental, and spiritual.

Seen in this light, Lady Temperance appears reasonable, even noble. Surely our culture has not spurned her. After all, we still try to teach our children self-control. Temperance may not be venerated anymore, but is she not still respected? Where might we look in our culture to find evidence that our venerable guide still has something to say to us?

Let us look first to her much maligned but traditional role as a leader of the prohibition movement. Our culture still calls on us to avoid drunkenness. But is Lady Temperance the reason for abstaining from alcohol or drinking in moderation? Do we, as a culture, emphasize internal self-control and restraint? Not really. Or not much, anyway. We have MADD and Alcoholics Anonymous. We have large universities trying to curb alcohol-related assault. Drunk driving, alcohol addiction, and date rape are social behaviors that lead to *negative consequences*, and so the culture fights against drunkenness.

It is good and right for the culture to attempt to mitigate the negative consequences, but the path that our culture follows is to control external factors. Stiffer penalties might solve drunk driving. Zero tolerance policies on campus might get through to thick-headed frat boys. Self-esteem building in school might prevent kids from turning to alcohol. What is missing in the rhetoric? Our Lady Temperance. It's just not cool to tell people that self-control is a key aspect



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to being good and doing right, or that the practice of self-discipline should be honored over self-indulgence. We don't just ignore Temperance; we don't even invite her to the table.

Are there other areas where we employ Temperance as our guide? Another natural passion in which Temperance has traditionally encouraged restraint is sexual appetite. One might think that Temperance is behind our culture declaiming against sexual misconduct such as rape, adultery, and pedophilia or, even more reprehensible, sex trafficking. It appears as if Temperance is alive and well and doing her job by holding the line in these areas. The culture may have shifted the line beyond where Temperance would approve, but at least it seems as if she has kept us from the worst excesses.

In this area, though, Temperance has even less of an influence on the culture than she does with regard to alcohol. Sexuality and





We may picture Temperance as Carrie Nation (1846-1911), a radical member of the “temperance” movement known for attacking taverns with a hatchet.

Lady Temperance, cont.

sensuality are not areas in which our culture encourages us to exercise self-control; rather sexuality is lauded as the pinnacle of human experience. One cannot live life to the fullest without having had amazing sex with an attractive partner. It is almost considered one of our civil rights. For example, if a partner in a marriage or relationship does not sexually satisfy the other, then a break-up is justified or even praised. We are encouraged to explore new and more exciting tastes, so long as no one gets hurt, of course. Our culture resists the idea of personal restraint in this realm and focuses instead on the negative social consequences. We focus on the external repercussions rather than the internal character of the wrongdoer. We praise sexual satisfaction and open doors to it socially. It is tragically ironic that we vilify those who succumb to behaviors we as a society glorify.

Also striking to note is where we place blame when it comes to some forms of sexual misconduct. Sex traffickers and pornographers are objects of disgust, and rightly so. What one rarely hears about is the guilt of the purchasers. The culture turns a blind eye to the “peccadilloes” of those who frequent prostitutes or pornography sites. We implicitly assume that expecting men to exert self-control is simply asking too much. The solution is always to look without, at the providers,

never within, at the users, as Temperance would invite us to do.

Our attitude toward drug use is nearly identical to that of alcohol and sexuality. Poor Lady Temperance never had a chance with this extreme version of self-gratification with its intense physical sensation and chemical addiction. With the help of science, we have figured out how to maximally enhance physical pleasure with drugs like methamphetamines. What chance does Temperance have? When legalization of marijuana was being debated in Oregon, the most common argument for legalization was that marijuana is less addictive and damaging than alcohol, which is legal. What was not part of the conversation was whether or not we want to encourage people to engage in an activity whose primary goal is to gain pleasure through modifying their experience of reality and, in the process, lose some control over movement, memory, and the ability to think. Essentially we were prioritizing bodily appetite over and above control of one’s mind and body, a prioritization Lady Temperance would undoubtedly bewail.

As with sex and alcohol, the source of the problem with drugs is misidentified. In dealing with the inevitable fallout of drugs, society is happy to wage a war on the providers such as drug cartels in Columbia and Mexico but less inclined to encourage us to look inward, to encourage potential users to exercise self-control. To the extent that we allow or condone drug use as a society, we should admit a share of the blame for the carnage in Mexico.

Alcohol, sex, and drugs, are perhaps the three most prominent fronts where Lady Temperance has lost ground recently. But in a society of wealth and leisure, she has been challenged along many other lines as well. Traditionally, food has been within Temperance’s purview. Lady Temperance has always supported eating, and it is obvious that the physical satisfaction associated with food is important to insure we eat. Where she would raise an eyebrow is at our culture’s tendency to over-indulge in food while disregarding other factors such as health or financial responsibility. I realize that there are many complicated reasons for the surge in weight gain in America, but the intemperate desire for satisfying our bodily appetite perhaps plays a role.

The emotional thrill provided by the entertainment industry is also an area where our appetites are constantly aroused. The appetites here are not directly physical, but work through feelings we obtain from emotional stimulation. Whether it be feelings of love, fear, happiness, or sadness, we are invited to indulge ourselves on a regular basis. The source of that emotional thrill is not limited to TV and movies but also extends to video games, sporting events, and, increasingly, news.

So given our culture’s current state, why should dowdy old Temperance regain our allegiance? What does she have to offer that could possibly outshine the newfound freedoms of our overindulgent ethos? I suggest that what Temperance wants for us—indeed, what she offers us—is the very freedom that her demise has presumably secured.

We rarely ask this question regarding freedom: What do we want to be free from? Some possibilities include freedom from authority, freedom from restriction, freedom from coercion, or freedom from pain. Anything that we see as negative, restricting, or bad is something that we want to be free from. But these particular freedoms need to be carefully examined for two reasons. First, freedom from restriction regarding a particular bodily appetite often sets us on a path of slavery to our bodily desires. Second, what we need most is freedom from that which robs us of our humanity and goodness and salvation—namely, sin.

Lady Temperance was clearly a common visitor at the hearth of the Apostle Paul. Paul speaks eloquently and at length about our need to be free from our slavery to sin. Some of the sins he was referring to were overindulging and wrongly prioritizing our bodily appetites.

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human

terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:16-23)

In addition to the authority of the Bible, we have our own experience to teach us about slavery to sin. We are a culture of various addictions: TV, internet, social media, video

games, shopping, exercise, new technology, watching sports, porn, alcohol, drugs, and even work. We are enslaved to these activities, and our enslavement takes away time, energy, and desire from our pursuit of what is good and truly valuable. We believe that indulging these appetites will satisfy us because doing so feels so good. But we all know, at least intellectually, that those feelings are not ultimately satisfying. In fact, often the exact opposite is true; indulging these appetites actually causes both ourselves and those around us significant pain. An untold number of lives and marriages are ravaged every year by alcohol, drugs, and pornography, for example.

Slaves are not their own masters. They have given up their ability to seek after what is truly satisfying. They are forced to succumb to the lies of an uncaring, unholy master. Slaves are not free, and the tragic irony is this: our culture tells us that by enslaving ourselves we are expressing the greatest of all freedoms.

Lady Temperance prizes self-control. She encourages us to judge and value rightly. She does not deny the bodily appetites but asks us to put them in perspective and weigh them against other priorities. Thus, Lady Temperance is not a cruel, exacting, down-in-the-mouth disciplinarian. She is soft-hearted. She yearns for us not to be caught up in the lies and snares of the slave master, Sin. She mourns for those who have found themselves enslaved. She calls to us to live freely and morally, to achieve what we were created for. The lies of the Enemy have tarnished her image and recast her as the enemy. But she is not the enemy; she is a friend in time of need. And we are in need. Let us call on her and restore her to her rightful place.

Chris Swanson has a Ph.D. in physics and is a tutor at Gutenberg College, where he teaches science and leads discussions in *Microexegesis*, *Western Civilization*, and the *Great Conversation*.



President David Crabtree and Gutenberg students pose in the *sukkah* (booth) they built with the help of Lynn Jacobson (standing, second from left), who also helped them understand more about the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (Feast of Booths). Thanks, Lynn!

Please be praying...

1) The fall quarter is well under way. We are so grateful for the nine new freshmen we have this year. This is the largest new class we have had in a long time. And there are two other students who returned after a year-long break, so the size of our student body is up quite dramatically from last year. We are very grateful for this turn of events and want to be praying even now for prospective students for next year.

2) The freshmen seem to be jumping in with enthusiasm. They are engaged and doing

well in their classes and learning by practice with the tutors the Socratic dialogue that is at the heart of a Gutenberg education. Please pray for hearts open to truth.

3) We've just celebrated Sukkot (Feast of Booths) as the second Jewish holiday on Gutenberg's new academic calendar. A member of the Messianic community in Eugene shared insights about the holiday and helped students build a *sukkah* (booth), a temporary shelter covered with plant material, like palm/tree branches, that commemorates God's provision for the

people of Israel during their forty years in the desert after God brought them out of Egypt. Pray that there will be other such opportunities for Gutenberg students to learn the history and culture of the Bible and that Gutenberg will be a place where others in the Messianic community will feel welcome. (See photo on page 3.)

4) Continue to pray for our finances. We have never lost sight of who is in control of our future as a college, and we look forward to God's leading as we consider plans for upcoming years.

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