

Gambling Is Not Intrinsically Sinful

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The Catholic Church has never infallible condemned gambling as intrinsically sinful. However, gambling, just like any other good thing, can be abused and misused and thus be sinful. Therefore, there is a good gambling and a sinful gambling.

The nominal Catholic Encyclopedia

Even though the nominal Catholic Encyclopedia contains many heresies, it tells the truth in regards to gambling:

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Gambling: “In its moral aspect, although gambling usually has a bad meaning, yet we may apply to it what was said about betting. On certain conditions, and apart from excess or scandal, it is not [sinful](#) to stake money on the issue of a game of chance any more than it is sinful to insure one's property against risk, or deal in futures on the produce market. As I may make a free gift of my own property to another if I choose, so I may agree with another to hand over to him a sum of money if the issue of a game of cards is other than I expect, while he agrees to do the same in my favour in the contrary event. Theologians commonly require four conditions so that gaming may not be illicit.

- What is staked must belong to the gambler and must be at his free disposal. It is wrong, therefore, for the lawyer to stake the money of his client, or for anyone to gamble with what is necessary for the maintenance of his wife and children.
- The gambler must act freely, without unjust compulsion.
- There must be no fraud in the transaction, although the usual ruses of the game may be allowed. It is unlawful, accordingly, to mark the cards, but it is permissible to conceal carefully from an opponent the number of trump cards one holds.

“If any of these conditions be wanting, gambling becomes more or less wrong”

Even though the following theologian was an apostate nominal Catholic, he teaches the truth regarding gambling:

Harnack and His Critics On The “De Aleatoribus”, by apostate Rev. G.H. Joyce, S.J., 1901: “All the evidence we possess goes to show that games of dice were played by the primitive Christians. The mere habit of playing apart from gambling may have been regarded as unbecoming in a cleric, but could scarcely have been looked on as a sin. Dice are not infrequently seen carved on the tombs of Christians in the Catacombs, and in some cases dice-boards have been found placed by the bodies. Lynesius (ep . 105 , P. G. 66, 1484) when pleading to be excused from the responsibilities of the Bishopric of Ptolemais , mentions among the reasons which render him unfit his inveterate habit of playing dice. It is clear that he is not speaking of a sin, but simply of a habit indicative at the worst of some trivial idleness.”¹

The Apostolic Canons (1st to 4th centuries)

The Apostolic Canons, composed between the 1st and 4th centuries, distinguishes between good gambling and sinful gambling. Sinful gambling is when one is addicted to gambling:

¹ Contained in *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*, vol. 26, From January to October, 1901, p. 684. The article is from pp. 675-693.

Apostolic Canons, 1st to 4th centuries:

“Canon 42: If a bishop or presbyter, or deacon is addicted to dice or drinking, let him either give it over, or be deposed. “

“Canon 43: If a subdeacon, reader, or singer, commits the same things, let him either give over, or be excommunicated. So also laymen.”

The key word is addicted. Hence gambling and drinking alcohol is only sinful when one is addicted to these things.

The heretical *De Aleatoribus* (3rd century)

Beware of the work titled *De Aleatoribus* which condemns all gambling as sinful. Some attribute it to St. Cyprian, others to a bishop or a pope. But neither is true. Its author was a Novatian heretic, either a Novatian bishop or Novatian himself, who was a heretical anti-pope.

Harnack and His Critics On The “De Aleatoribus”, by apostate Rev. G.H. Joyce, S.J., 1901: “[p. 675] Hence the publication by Professor Hamack in 1888 of his commentary on the “*De Aleatoribus*”—a small treatise preserved among the works of S. Cyprian, but which has long been known not to have come from his pen...

“[p. 685] We cannot say with any certainty that either *apostolat&s ducatus* or *vicaria Domini sedes* denote a Papal origin. Although we could not use them at the present day of any but the Holy See, yet examples may be found in early Christian writings of similar terms applied to other Bishops besides those of Rome...

[p. 697] No convincing argument can in this case be brought to prove that a Pope was the author.

“[p. 676] Of these Hilgenfeld regards it as unquestionable that the expressions of the author imply a claim to be Pope, but holds that the rigorist doctrine contained in the work makes it no less certain that the writer was not the true occupant of the chair of Peter, but a Novatian antipope. Hence he assigns it confidently to that Novatian Bishop Acesius who was present at the Council of Nicaea... We know nothing of any Novatian anti-popes besides the founder of the schism himself.”

The Novatians were stoics and held the heresy that some sins can never be forgiven, such as the sin of idolatry. Hence they taught that Christians who lapsed from the faith by committing a sin of idolatry could never be forgiven:

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Novatian and Novatianism: “Novatian was a schismatic of the third century, and founder of the sect of the Novatians; he was a Roman priest, and made himself antipope... Novatian was called a heretic, not only by Cyprian but throughout the Church, for his severe views about the restoration of those who had lapsed in the persecution. He held that idolatry was an unpardonable sin, and that the Church had no right to restore to communion any who had fallen into it... Novatian had refused absolution to idolaters; his followers extended this doctrine to all ‘mortal sins’ (idolatry, murder, and adultery, or fornication).”

The work *De Aleatoribus* was probably a sermon and not a letter and was probably written in the third century. It was written by a Novatian heretic who was a bishop and possibly an antipope and thus possibly written by Novatian himself. The work makes no distinction between good gambling and sinful gambling. It says all gambling is of the Devil and idolatry and thus a sin against the faith. Therefore, it says, so-called Christians who gamble are not Christians.

What follows is a summary of some of the contents in *De Aleatoribus*:

Harnack and His Critics On The “De Aleatoribus”, by apostate Rev. G.H. Joyce, S.J., 1901: “[pp. 678-679] ...Gambling is one of the ways in which the devil catches those who have escaped from his snares (c. 5). The gaming table is the natural home

of a whole catalogue of sins; it leads men to perjury, hatred, the scattering of ancestral wealth, and further even to dissolute living; for the gambling hell is only too often a brothel also (c. 6). The main indictment is then preferred—that gambling is inseparably connected with idolatry... The following is the passage (c. 10) which is said to contain a rigorist doctrine: ‘The Lord says in the Gospel that for a sin against God there is no excuse nor forgiveness, and that none receives pardon... p. 682 The severity of its tone astonishes us. A gambler is no longer a Christian but a pagan, he is an idolater, he has committed a sin against God, for which there is no forgiveness.’”

What follows are quotes from the text itself and my comments:

De Aleatoribus, 3rd century: 5) ...It is, I tell you, the hand of the gambler, which destroys and condemns itself. The hand that has been become used to a libidinous pursuit, the gaming table, the devil’s spear and incurable wound of wrong... 7. This idolatrous pastime, whence this crime, we can confirm by the testimony of writers... 8. ... If you are a Christian and gamble, then you must know this above all, that you are not a Christian but a pagan and your sacrifice to the Lord is empty... Gambler, whoever you, you call yourself a Christian, but you are not because you partake of the world. You can have no friendship with Christ, you who are an enemy of Christ... 9) ...A Christian who gambles pollutes his hands by sacrificing to the devil in the gaming house... 11) Do not be a gambler. Be a Christian.⁴”

While sinful gambling is a sin, it is not a sin against the faith but a sin against morals. In this next passage, it teaches the Novatian heresy by saying that the sin of gambling can never be forgiven because it is a sin of idolatry:

De Aleatoribus, 3rd century: “9) ... A Christian who gambles pollutes his hands by sacrificing to the devil in the gaming house. 10) For sins against God there is no excuse or indulgence or forgiveness.”

The following quote says all gamblers are dishonest, go with prostitutes, squander their wealth, plunge their families into poverty, and are perjurers:

De Aleatoribus, 3rd century: “6) ...The gaming table, I say, where there is madness, venality and dishonesty. It is the place of rabid friendship and wild impatience, where huge fortunes and possessions are lost, people become insanely and ferociously litigious. O the idle harmfulness and numbing worthlessness of gamblers ! O cruel hand armed at risk to itself that wastes paternal goods and hard-earned inherited wealth with such ignominious zeal! O cruel hand, fuelled by noxious insomnia, night and day ceaselessly wielding the weapons of its own destruction, that condemns itself by sinning and after sinning is unable to stop! Worthless hand, equipped to destroy its master, which fritters away its wealth with the basest instruments, when so much family wealth is there to be increased, is now penniless and poor! ...The gaming table is evil and the trap of an enemy who does not confer wealth but rather takes it all away. It makes people poor, destroys their wealth, forces them into debt, robs them of their inheritance without legal proceedings of any sort. I ask you, what sort of people are they who are not persecuted by anyone but invidiously persecute themselves so that they squander their patrimony with knucklebones. And when gamblers spend nights behind the closed doors of their host with prostitute women, the wretches full of the spirit of the devil, they are taking up arms against themselves. They are guilty of two offences: in one place, with the rattling sound of the dice; in another, with the silence of sinful sex. In one place, without any consideration of their dignity and without any excuse, they are forced by destructive zeal to make over their property; in another, they secretly imbibe the mortal poison...

“9. To be sure, there is considerable madness among Christian gamblers: they rage and prejure themselves with furious voices; bereaved of the darkness of the devil, they attack each other, they curse and complain, they dishonour their parents before others.. A Christian who gambles pollutes his hands by sacrificing to the devil in the gaming house....

“11. Do not be a gambler.... Distribute your money on the Lord's table, where Christ presides and the angels and the martyrs look on. The inheritance which you would probably have lost with zealous ferocity, divide it among the poor, entrust your wealth to the victorious Christ, amuse yourself as a servant.”

While some of these things may be true regarding sinful gamblers (such as the squandering their wealth and plunging their families into poverty), it certainly is not true about good gamblers. And it is not all true even regarding sinful gamblers. For example, just because a man gambles does not mean he automatically lies, commits sins of fornication, perjures himself, sacrifices to the devil, squanders his wealth, and plunges his family into poverty. All men, no matter what their occupation or recreation, can commit these sins also. These are separate sins. For example, a medical doctor or even a priest can commit sins of fornication but a gambler does not, etc.

Now for some more rank dishonesty by the author of this letter, who himself is of the devil (a Novatian heretic), a liar, and a stoic. He deceptively and illogically tells the gambler to give the money to the poor (which is a good thing) to make the gambler fell guilty for spending his money on gambling instead of giving it to the poor:

De Aleatoribus, 3rd century: “11. Do not be a gambler.... Distribute your money on the Lord's table, where Christ presides and the angels and the martyrs look on. The inheritance which you would probably have lost with zealous ferocity, divide it among the poor, entrust your wealth to the victorious Christ, amuse yourself as a servant.”

Well, that can be said about anything a Christian spends his money on other than the bare necessities he needs to live on. For example, according to this stoic, a Christian sins for going on a vacation because he should have stayed home and given the money to the poor. Or he sins for going to a movie or opera or play or sporting event because he could have given the money to the poor. Or he sins by for feasting on wine and other good foods because he should have given these things to the poor. In fact, Jesus sinned by making that best wine at Cana and drinking it with the guests instead of selling it and giving the money to the poor. And, according to this stoic heretic, the woman who anointed Jesus body for his burial sinned for not selling the ointments and giving the money to the poor:

“And when he was in Bethania, in the house of Simon the leper, and was at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of precious spikenard: and breaking the alabaster box, she poured it out upon his head. Now there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said: Why was this waste of the ointment made? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her.” (Mk. 14:3-5)

Can you not see how evil, deceptive, and dangerous stoics are? But they are easily detected by non-stoics because stoics go against man's good natural instincts and good behavior that God placed in the nature and hearts of all men.

The heretical Council of Elvira (AD 306)

Beware, also, of the fallible, heretical, and stoic Council of Elvira in 306 which condemns all gambling as sinful:

Heretical *Council of Elvira*, 306: “Canon 79. Christians who play dice for money are to be excluded from receiving communion. If they amend their ways and cease, they may receive communion after one year.”

This same council teaches the iconoclast heresy:

Heretical *Council of Elvira*, 306: “Canon 36. There shall be no pictures in churches, lest what is worshipped and adored be depicted on walls.”

And it teaches the heresy that Christians who light candles in a cemetery commit an act of paganism:

Heretical *Council of Elvira*, 306: “Canon 34. Candles are not to be burned in a cemetery during the day. This practice is related to paganism and is harmful to Christians. Those who do this are to be denied the communion of the Church.”

It also contains the Novatian heresy that decrees that there are certain sins that can never be forgiven and thus those who commit them can never receive communion; such as sins of idolatry in which Christians lapsed from the faith and thus were called lapsi and for sexual offenses that were committed a second time:

Heretical *Council of Elvira*, 306:

“Canon 1. A baptized adult who commits the capital crime of sacrificing to the idols is not to receive communion even when death approaches.

“Canon 7. If a Christian completes penance for a sexual offense and then again commits fornication, he or she may not receive communion even when death approaches.

“Canon 63. If a woman conceives in adultery and then has an abortion, she may not receive communion again, even as death approaches, because she has sinned twice.”

It also contains stoic and thus unjust, and even outrageous, penances for repentant sinners.

Good vs Sinful Gambling

I have known many gamblers and most of them are good gamblers. There are two kinds of good gambling:

- Recreational Gambling
- Non-sinful Professional Gambling

Recreational Gambling

Recreational gambling is good, as long as the money is not spent that should be used for living expenses. It does not matter how a man spends his money on recreation, as long as that money is not needed for his living expenses or the living expenses of his family if he has one. The attitude with this type of good gambling is to count the money lost and thus the gambling is done for the enjoyment of the game. Regarding good recreations, the Word of God says,

“Take thy pastime. And do what thou hast a mind, but not in sin or proud speech.”
(Eccus. 32:15-16)

Take the following example: For recreation, a man can spend \$50 on going to a movie, a play, an opera, or a sporting event, or he can spend it on skiing, ice skating, or hunting. In all these cases, he loses his \$50 dollars. Now these are all good recreations, as long as he does not spend money on them that is needed for his living expenses. He can also spend the \$50 on recreational gambling in which he may lose the \$50, as he does in the other forms of recreation, or he can make some money. In this case he gambles for the fun and challenge of the game. With this type of good gambling, the gambler counts his money lost and counts himself lucky if he wins.

Like all good things, recreational gambling must be done in moderation. Hence it must not take up time that must or should be spent on other things.

Non-Sinful Professional Gambling

Non-sinful professional gambling is when the money that is spent gambling is not needed for living expenses *and* in which enough money is made to cover living expenses or part of living expenses in the case of income from another source. In this type of gambling, more money is made in the long run than lost, as is the case with those who are good at skill games, like poker, in which the odds are not against the player.

The time spent on professional gambling can be the same as spent in another full time job.

Sinful Gambling

Sinful gambling is when a man gambles with money that is needed for living expenses or the living expenses of his family if he has one. If it drives him into debt, it can be either a venial sin or mortal sin depending on how much debt he incurs. It is a mortal sin if he drives him into poverty or bankruptcy.

Sinful gambling also destabilizes the life of the gambler and his family if he has one. He is rich on day, poor the next. And, by his own fault, he has no stable and sure way to provide for his life and that of his family if he has one. It is like he is murdering himself and his family if he has one.

Example of Good, Sinful, and then Good Gambling

I, myself, was a good gambler who became a sinful gambler and then a good gambler.

I was a good professional gambler when I played Black Jack when only one deck was used, and I counted cards. Card counting is not cheating but a system of keeping track in your mind how many high cards have been dealt as opposed to low cards. When one deck is used, you are guaranteed to win in the long run.

To prevent this, the casinos started to use six decks and never dealt to the end of the six decks. They would re-shuffle three quarters into the deck. Hence card counting did not work. Instead of guaranteed wins in the long run, guaranteed losses were incurred. But I, nevertheless, gambled this way to make a living, which was now sinful gambling. My goal was to make \$100 dollars a day or \$500 a week. But it did not work out that way. You lose more than you make in the long run; and thus if you gamble like that for a living or even to pay part of your expenses, you will fall deeper and deeper into debt and become poorer and poorer.

Once I realized this, I said, "No More." I only gambled then for recreation in which I counted the money lost when I gambled. I only gambled with money I would have spent on some other form of recreation.

So I went from being a good gambler, to a sinful gambler, to a good gambler.

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

Original version: 6/2023; Current version: 6/2023

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