

Christian temperance and prohibition

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This paper seeks to investigate the theme of Christian Temperance and Prohibition in the American South. The paper will require helpful, logical arguments concerning the ties of evangelism to the alcohol prohibition movement in the American South. The regions covered in the American South include Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. In the ancient times, ban was so widespread that movements like Yankee movement were seen as Christian temperance and the paper will analyze the reasons for this belief.

The paper will explore this topic by looking at the history of the matter, activities they undertook, and the reasons for it being in the American South. The aim of this paper is to analyze the subject of Christian Temperance and Prohibition in the American South. This subject will help us understand the ties of evangelism to prohibitions such as alcohol prohibition, which was in the American South. Taking for instance, people have carried several researches on the subject of Christian temperance and prohibition. The researcher comes with a study with some questions regarding the historical perspective of the Christian temperance and prohibition.

The researcher will then select a region in the American South where he will administer his research. The aim of the researcher is to gather information regarding the subject and the test will be given to the residents of American South who will be in a position to supply data regarding the movements[1]. Without doubt, the subject of Christian temperance and prohibition is a matter that profoundly affected the American South region as most of the movements were in regions that covered the south of America. Like most historical issues in ancient times, the major question in this paper is the <https://assignbuster.com/christian-temperance-and-prohibition/>

evangelical ties that were in connection to prohibition movements in the south of America. In research, information can be from primary or secondary sources. Primary sources of information involve first hand information obtained using interviews, questionnaires, and observation.

Secondary information is from books, electronic database, and magazines among other records. In this paper, most of the information was from books, academic journals, and other publications. Results and discussions In the year 1920, the United States launched one of its greatest social experiments- an attempt to put a ban on within its boundaries concerning the production and sale of alcoholic beverages. In the earlier year, the states had ratified the 18th Amendment setting the procedure in motion. The federal government on its part had followed with passing the legislation by providing the definition of alcoholic drinks.

In addition, the federal government established an enforcement protocol and set the penalties for the violators of the rule. This passing was after it received approval from thirty-six states. Alcoholism and alcohol was a contentious social issue in America and the government was seeking a way of curbing this otherwise unacceptable social issue. There is a wider history to this prohibition and goes way back to reform era in the pre-civil war[2]. Prior to the 1920 prohibition, there had been earlier attempts to contain the issue of alcohol and alcoholism. This was by the use of informal social controls in the community and home as they supported the government in minimizing the abuse of alcohol.

This was so serious that, in the 18th century, there was a research done by Rush Benjamin to examine the impacts of alcohol on the persons mind and body. His findings revealed that alcohol had dangerous implications to the human body and psychological health and these results would see the branding of drunkenness as sickness. These developments led to the formation of the first temperance movements in the United States.

Temperance movement was in the United States in the 19th century and 20th centuries. This was a social movement whose dedications were on the encouragement of reduction or total ban of the use of alcoholic drinks in the country. The drive to put a ban to the utilization of intoxicating beverages was not an American ideology.

Most societies from ancient times shared a common yearning to maintain stability and had a belief that drunkenness caused illness, disintegration of families, and impoverishment[3]. Movements for temperance came up in several western countries mostly in the northern Europe. The movements constituted of a diversity of political, religious, and social groups that were unified in their conviction that the United States would be a better country in several ways if its citizens quit consuming alcohol. The efforts of these temperance movements led to alcohol prohibition between 1920 and 1933. In the start of the 19th century, an increasing segment of the American people believed that consumption of alcohol was having a negative influence on the American population.

Some of the negative effects of alcohol that the temperance group pointed out were increasing in crime and violence, workplace issues, and unemployment. The temperance groups mostly had religious leaders as their

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members, and they preached the consumption of alcohol as a sinful act that result to moral decline of both the American society and churchgoers. In the early 1830s, the number of temperance movements had gone up with thousands of members being from the United States. Massachusetts State was the first to publish a law that had restrictions on the purchase of liquor- it required that liquor be purchased in large quantities. The law meant to curb alcohol purchase by the laboring class who would have difficulty buying alcohol in large quantities.

Maine enacted a law in the 1846 that was to make the prohibition of alcohol a national affair and not just in selected states. As this issue grew, with several people airing their views on the matter were many groups that came and even made the issue a political affair. For instance, there was the Prohibition Party in 1869, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was in the political arena in the year 1874. The emergence of these groups led to sharp differences in the American societies concerning alcohol reforms and by 1890s, there was a substantial difference on the issue between the urban and rural dwellers. Most of the rural dwellers were in the South and West of America, and the regions were Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

The rural dwellers viewed the urban centers as home to alcohol and a horde of other vices. This view led to the emergence of most Christian temperance from the south of America, which strongly contributed to the idea of alcohol prohibition. The above is a historical perspective of the origin of prohibition of alcohol in the south of America. An issue sprout from small religious matters and blew up to be a national matter. The temperance movements <https://assignbuster.com/christian-temperance-and-prohibition/>

were the reasons as to why the legislation of the prohibition bill was effective in the early 1920s as they pushed for the idea in the federal government. We now analyze the connection of Christian temperance to the prohibition of alcohol and concerning the south of America.

The temperance movements mostly comprised of religious leaders who were in the forefront in supporting of prohibition of alcohol in the United States. The initial supporters of this prohibition were the American Temperance Society, and it helped in bringing the early temperance movements, as it was the basis of later such groups. In the early 1840s, pietistic religious groups led these movements and mostly they were the Methodists. In the late 19th century, the movements widened their reasons for prohibition and included abstinence to all moral degrading behaviors and organizations that related to alcohol consumption. For instance in his preaching Reverend Mark Matthews connected alcohol dispensing saloons with prostitution. Evangelical of other Christian denominations preached against consuming alcohol and regarded it as a sin.

Their preaching made it clear that people who consumed alcohol had lost their devotion in God and by drinking; they were not observing the teachings of Jesus[4]. One of the notable Christian temperance of the time is the group of Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was on the front line in prohibiting alcohol consumption, in America. Their support for the prohibition of alcohol was public, and this included lobbying elected officials for acts banning the drinking of alcohol. This Christian temperance based their arguments on the teachings of the bible with several of their references pointing at the bible verses. Most of the leaders of the temperance groups

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were religious leaders of the society who were playing the role of ensuring the society has people who are alcohol free. The main reason that led to the emergence of temperance movements were the declining social standards amongst the American citizens.

In the era of these alcohol prohibitions, there were several societal and personal problems, which comprised of absenteeism from work, unemployment, and physical violence especially in marriages. The evangelical leaders saw all these issues because of consumption of alcohol by the American citizens, and it was affecting the morals of the US citizens. In any society, the religious leaders of the society usually tackle such issues of moral degradation and declining social standards. Their role includes guiding the individuals of their society to follow the right ways of life, and this is normally carried out by the use of religious information and sources like the bible. The temperance movements' initial basis of formation was to guide and preach to the societies of the evil impacts of alcohol consumption to the society and individuals[5]. The issue of alcohol consumption amongst American citizens was so inimical to the extent that most of books and short stories in the 19th century talked about this issue.

They described in detail the abuse suffered by families of alcoholics. There was the notion that alcoholics were so dangerous even to themselves. They were a security threat to their families and the nation. As the greater part of the supporters of the prohibition of alcohol consumption were Christians it brought about bonding of the two- prohibition in the United States and Christianity. Churches in America strongly supported the restriction of gluttony, intoxication, and overindulgence of alcohol. People considered the <https://assignbuster.com/christian-temperance-and-prohibition/>

success of prohibition as the victory of the social gospel activists who were battling against social issues in America.

Prohibition was a stage that saw the uniting of the revivalists and progressives of the 19th century. It is evident the Christians, and evangelical leaders had a substantial input in the prohibition of alcohol law as they were the greater part of the temperance movements[6]. Prohibition in the 19th century was so rampant to the extent that prohibition was once considered a Yankee reform movement. It was a statewide effort in trying to curb the negative implications of alcohol consumption and any association were preaching the issues of prohibition. The Yankee reform movement was a reform group that was fighting for reforms in the American society, and it was not a Christian temperance movement as most people thought.

The Christian temperance was different from the reform group though they were all advocating for change in the society. Lastly, we analyze the principal reasons as to why the southerners were slow in embracing the prohibition of alcohol notion[7]. The southerners of the United States were dwellers who mostly came from the rural regions. These regions include Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. Initially the prohibition issue was an issue of either the urban dwellers as the urban centers were considered the source of alcohol beverages. When the campaigns against alcohol consumption began, the rural dwellers considered this an issue of the urban dwellers and they were less concerned about it.

The rural dwellers were of the idea that the urban dwellers need to carry their own burden, which included the impacts of alcohol consumption. These

impacts included criminal activities and violence and statistics had that most of these were occurring in the urban areas. The earlier movements, which supported the ban of alcohol, were from the urban areas where the degree of socials and morals of the people had gone down. The fact that these issues were originally from the urban areas made the southerners to be slow in embracing the idea of prohibition, as they were not affected. The rural areas were not experiencing the impacts of alcohol consumption, and they did not embrace the idea of prohibiting alcohol.

In the earlier times, the prohibition law was only in states, which did not include the south of America. Until later in the century when the prohibition law was made a statewide case, did the rural dwellers start applying the laws. The citizens of the south of America started to engage in the activities of prohibition, in the later years when the law was made public and alcohol prohibition was a nationwide issue. They decided to embrace the idea as they started experiencing the negative implications of alcoholism like physical violence and social and personal issues. The evidence of the slow embracing of the prohibition in the south of America can be seen during the voting for the prohibition law[8].

The south initially did not vote for the idea and led to the prohibition losing in the south regions like Texas. Campaigns in the area concerning prohibition failed with people in the region rejecting the passing of the prohibition law on alcohol. Another reason for the slow action of the people of the south was that the region was highly populated with white people who considered the issue of alcohol as a problem of Blacks and Black Americans. It is clear that there is a strong link between the Christian temperance and prohibition

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especially in the 19th century. The origin of the temperance movements was the social issues in America at the time, and the religious leaders took upon themselves to help sort out the issues. Religious leaders linked these social problems in America with overindulgence in alcohol.

This notion led to the emergence of temperance movements whose better population comprised of Christians. The religious leaders preached against alcohol consumption citing it as a sin in the eyes of God and that it was downgrading the morals of society. Since most of the members of these temperance movements were Christians, some of the movements were referred to as Christian temperance movements. The movements were rampant in the urban areas of the United States and these meant that the people of the south, which is mostly the rural area, were slow in embracing the idea of prohibition. The position law has a close association with the emergence and notions of Christian temperance especially in the south of America regions.