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## Book Review of *Man Takes a Drink* by John C. Ford

Nelson J. Bradley

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# Book Review

## *Man Takes A Drink*

By John C. Ford, S.J.

### Review by

Nelson J. Bradley, M.D.  
Superintendent, Willmar State Hospital  
Willmar, Minnesota

This is an unusual book. It is easily read in one evening. With so large a share of our population drinking alcohol, the first portion of the book on "Facts about Ethyl Alcohol" is, at first, deceiving. It is very simply stated, and it is only when you have finished this chapter that you realize how little accurate *factual* material concerning alcohol is available. The author must have felt, as anyone in the field of alcoholism feels, that to understand any of the complexities of the problems one must first have an accurate working knowledge of the substance itself. I feel the reader of this book will continue to use it as a reference.

The second portion of the book attempts to stimulate your thinking through the problem of whether or not one should drink alcohol, at all or excessively. This portion is written in simple language, so there is no excuse for not reading, thinking, and applying at the same time. This chapter does not attempt to answer your questions: it

is more an exercise, and I think the same can be said for the last portion of the book dealing with the more specific problem of alcoholism and the alcoholic.

This book is significant in that it is part of a trend. The three great forces that have concerned themselves with the alcohol problem throughout its history — medical sciences, legal authorities, and our spiritual leaders — have found it necessary during the last twenty years to re-evaluate their attitudes about alcohol. Medical sciences have contributed a great deal to the study of the problem, but almost nothing of value in the *treatment* of the problem. They have had to inventory their own approach, since it has been indubitably proven that an alcoholic *can* recover. Formal religion has, of course, been extremely interested in the new alcohol movement, because spiritual values have played so much a part in this new hope for the alcoholic. Formal behavior psychologists will have to inquire as

to whether their formal approach precludes the development of spiritual insight. The effectiveness of legal punishment grows increasingly pessimistic when we begin to realize that possibly the alcoholic is a man with *too much* conscience.

This book by Father Ford is an extremely pertinent and significant one, not only as a source of a great deal of interesting and accurate information about alcohol but as a stimulation for a very thorough inventory of the reader's moral investment in the drinking of alcohol, in the alcoholic, and the problem of alcoholism.

### MAN TAKES A DRINK

published by  
P. J. Kenedy & Sons  
12 Barclay Street  
New York 8, New York  
Feb. 1955, \$2.50

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### Another new book reaches the Editor's desk . . .

"Modern scientific psychology is beginning to rediscover the mental hygiene value of traditional Christianity," says Rev. James E. Royce, S.J., Ph.D., in his book *Personality and Mental Health*.

One section in the book treats the relations of religion, including the use of the Confessional, to mental health and the work of the psychiatrist. Dr. Royce points out that each has different roles, but they are complementary, not antagonistic. He also exposes the contemporary confusion between

"normal" and "average" which "stems from false values and muddled thinking," he says. "Scientific accuracy demands that we sharpen our use of such terms," the psychologist declares, "or logically we would call the star athlete or leader abnormal because they are not average. What is really dangerous about this confusion is that people lower their standards and lose their precious individuality because they think that to be normal they must be average."

The old mind-body controversy is also given a different twist by the assertion that both sides are wrong. The answer does not lie in a choice between the two, according to this author, because man is one being; the ailments are simply human.

The book, off the press in February of this year, is published by the Bruce Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (pp 350, \$3.50). It was originally written for students of education, nursing, social work, and psychology at Seattle University. The author is a member of the American Psychological Association and a charter member of the American Catholic Psychological Association. Dr. Royce received his doctor's degree from Loyola University in Chicago, and also studied under Thomas Verner Moore and Rudolf Allers in Washington, D. C. He is on the book reviewing staff of several national periodicals.