

# The Use of Wine

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Now as to the use of wine. There is nothing like getting down to foundation principles: for often a false doctrine is working, concealed amidst religiousness, and there is nothing more handy for Satan to use than false principles so disguised.

First, it was remarkable that our Lord's first miracle performed in the world was turning water into wine, at a wedding feast. Strange fact for teetotallers! How contrary to ascetic religion is such an act—the last thing that a religious man would think of. Man's religion is "Handle not, taste not, touch not," and these "commandments and doctrines of men" have indeed an "appearance of wisdom," but meet with unsparing condemnation in Col. ii.

Second, drinking wine is an essential part of Christian testimony, specifically enjoined in the Lord's Supper. This would certainly not be the

case, if the drinking of wine were an evil in itself.

Third, notice that the blessed Lord entered heartily into the social life of the people, not banning their meat and drink, and receiving, in consequence, the reproach of His enemies, "Behold a . . . winebibber" (Matt. xi. 19).

Fourth, wine was used at the Paschal Feast, with the Lord's express sanction; and though, for special reasons in His own case, He did not then partake of it Himself, He told the apostles *all* to drink of it; and this was not ceremonial, as it related to the earlier cup which was part of the feast, not to the one after supper out of which He instituted the Eucharist.

Fifth, the banning from use of God's creatures is condemned in Col. ii., already referred to (see also 1 Tim. iv. 3-7).

Sixth, the use of wine when specially required is apostolically recommended to the servant of the Lord in 1 Tim. v. 23, and that, notwithstanding that the abuse of wine was not unknown in

the Christian community in which he was (see chap. iii. 3, 8).

Seventh, though there are abundant references to wine in the New Testament, it is in no case prohibited. Excess is denounced: but even in the detailed qualifications for bishops and deacons, while wine is mentioned, its abuse only is deprecated. The proper use of wine is, in the New Testament, not even discountenanced.

SO FAR FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT. We have there, both in Gospels and Epistles, a body of testimony which is dead against prohibition. There is no resisting it, if one is subject to Scripture.

The voice of THE OLD TESTAMENT is equally pronounced and decisive. Wine is mentioned there as under God's blessing one of the marks of His favour to Israel—"He will love thee and bless thee . . . He will also bless thy corn and thy wine and thine oil" (Deut. vii. 13).

It was daily offered to Jehovah in the temple—"In the holy place shalt thou cause the strong

wine to be poured unto Jehovah for a drink offering " (Num. xxviii. 3, 7). The scriptures in which, as a special earthly blessing it is spoken of, are too numerous to quote, but take the following, Deut. xi. 14 ; xxxiii. 28.

Israel is reproached with not having recognised that her wine came from Jehovah (Hos. ii. 9).

It is to be a millennial blessing (Hos. ii. 21, 22).

Melchisedec, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine for Abram, and Mephibosheth's servant brought wine to David (Gen. xiv. 18 ; 2 Sam. xvi. 1).

Psalms civ. tells us that it is Jehovah Who maketh the herb to grow—" for the service of man ; bringing forth bread out of the earth, and wine which gladdeneth the heart of man " (vers. 14, 15).

It is pretty evident that God does not frown upon the use of wine. And so in other passages. The burden of Scripture testimony is that wine is one of God's good gifts to man, intended by its proper use to cheer, help and invigorate him.

I do not here refer to the Scriptural denuncia-

tions of excess, which are abundant, particularly in the Prophets ; nor to all that we know of its evils, because that is not the subject in question. What is now under consideration, is not the abuse of wine, but its use ; and Paul, contrary to all ascetic notions, instructs Timothy that, " Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if received with thanksgiving," etc. (1 Tim. iv. 4), adding immediately, " If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine " (ver. 6).

I have said that I have no sympathy with Teetotalism, but the searching of Scripture gives me a much more decided judgment against it than I had before. I had looked upon it as a harmless fad, rather good than otherwise ; but scriptural investigation shows me differently. Contrasting it with New Testament doctrine, as I have quoted, Teetotalism appears to me to be a REFLECTION UPON CHRISTIANITY. It is the Colossian error of

supplementing Christianity from the resources of human wisdom ; not openly denying, but adding to it, and thus implying that it is not perfect and complete in itself. Paul says to the Colossians, " Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world and not after Christ." " Ye are complete in Him " (Col. ii. 8, 10). See also verses 16, 20-23 of same chapter.

I do not admit that Christianity needs to be supplemented, or its holy principles added to, from the repertory of Total Abstinence philosophy or any other. Coming after Christianity, Teetotalism is an impertinence (I do not use the word in an offensive sense) ; it virtually impugns the wisdom of our Lord, denying the completeness of the doctrine and precepts which, by Himself and His apostles, He has handed down to us.

Besides being a reflection on Christianity, Teetotalism is a REFLECTION UPON GOD AS CREATOR. Now whatever God has created is good ; it is

man's sin that turns it into evil. Drunkenness is the abuse of a creature of God. The created thing itself is good, and its proper use beneficial. But Teetotalism treating the thing as evil really reproaches God with having created an evil thing, and, *pro tanto*, reduces or denies man's sin in the matter. It thus throws upon God the blame of man's sin, which is, in principle, just what Adam did when he said: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

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