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SERMON XXXII.*

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THE SCRIPTURAL DUTY OF AVOIDING OFFENCES,
CONSIDERED IN ITS APPLICATION TO THE SUBJECT OF TEMPERANCE.

1 COR. 8:13. *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

To the Christians of Rome the apostle addresses the following exhortation: *Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* The importance of following after those things which may tend, to mutual edification, is probably not sufficiently appreciated by the generality of Christian professors. Wrapped up in their own individual concerns, and yielding too much to the influence of the contracted spirit of selfishness, there is among the professed followers of Christ too generally, a disposition to look, every man upon his own things, not upon the things of others. But says the apostle, *We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* Being thus compacted together in one body, we have a mutual interest in each other. It is therefore to the advantage of each individual member, as well as to the whole body, that there be no schism in the body of Christ, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And if one member suffers, all the members should sympathize with it, or if one member is honored, all the members should rejoice with it. Regarding each other as members of one common body, it should be with the disciples of Christ a settled maxim, that none of us liveth to himself. And therefore while we study to advance the interests of godliness in our own souls, we should aim at such a course as may tend to mutual edification.

* Delivered before the Temperance Society of Noblestown.

There probably never was a man who better understood, or more happily exemplified, this important maxim in Christian ethics, than Paul the apostle. While he understood the nature of his Christian liberty, and where principle was involved, would contend for it, yet so desirous was he to promote the edification of his brethren, that he would deny himself, rather than do any thing which would have a tendency to place a stumbling-block in the way of the weak. When his right to a temporal support from those among whom he labored in preaching the gospel was called in question, he boldly asserted and maintained it. But while he claimed the right, he waived the exercise of it, and submitted to many personal inconveniencies, lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ. The same spirit of self-denial and benevolence is displayed in the chapter from which the text is taken, where the question with regard to the eating of meats which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, is under consideration. Though the apostle admits the lawfulness of the thing in itself, yet with respect to the edification of those brethren whose Christian knowledge was more limited, he recommends to his better informed brethren to refrain.

Amongst pagan idolators, it was the usual custom when an animal was offered in sacrifice to one of their idols, that a part of the carcass was consumed upon the altar, a part was given to the priest, and on the remainder the offerers feasted with their friends, either in the idol's temple or at home. And on such occasions, it sometimes happened in the primitive days of Christianity, that their Christian neighbors were invited to partake with them. Hence a question arose in the Corinthian church, whether it was lawful for a Christian to eat such flesh. The apostle admits the lawfulness of the thing in itself; for, *We know that an idol is nothing in the world.* And the offering of flesh to a vain, imaginary deity, does not alter its nature, nor render it unfit for food. Yet while this matter might be perfectly understood by the intelligent Christian, there is not in every man that knowledge. Some, owing to the imperfection of their knowledge and their early prejudices, would be ready to suppose that in eating this flesh, they paid some respect to the idol to whom it was offered, and thus their weak conscience would be defiled. Inasmuch, therefore, as the exercise of his liberty, on the part of the well-informed Christian, would have a tendency to involve his weak brother in sin, the apostle recommends to refrain. *For neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* You who understand the matter, can without injury to yourselves refrain, while the exercise of your liberty may become an occasion of injury to others. And with that spirit of benevolence for which he was so eminently distinguished, he says for himself, *If meat*

make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The word here translated *to offend*, signifies properly, to cause to stumble, to lay an impediment in the way of another, which may endanger his fall. It is used in the New Testament only in a figurative sense. And to offend, in the scriptural acceptation of the term, is to do that which has a tendency to lead another into sin, so as to cause him to stumble or fall in his Christian profession. The principle here laid down by the apostle is a general one, and one of much practical importance—that, even from those things, the use of which is lawful, it is a Christian duty to abstain, when the exercise of our liberty has a tendency to injure others, by leading them into sin. And if this is true in relation to those things which may be lawfully enjoyed, much more ought we to abstain from those things which are not proper to be used.

The general principle is equally as applicable to the use of drinks, as of meats. And it is my design, on the present occasion, to apply it to the subject of temperance, which is now, with great propriety, occupying a large share of the public attention.

And let it be remarked generally, that while, as every one knows, Christianity requires the exercise of temperance in all things, in the use of food and of clothing, in labor and in innocent recreations, as well as in the use of drinks, and consequently, intemperance in any of these things is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, the present discourse has reference to that species of intemperance, which is productive of more evil to society at large, than perhaps all others, which results from the use of intoxicating liquors.

That intemperance is an evil of a most destructive character, and one which has prevailed to a fearful extent in our land, all must admit. That for its suppression all proper means should be employed, is a matter in relation to which there can be among reflecting men, but one opinion. It is unnecessary for me to attempt to portray before this auditory, the misery, and wretchedness, and crime, which arise from this source. I shall not undertake to recount the number of our valuable citizens, whom it has brought from the height of usefulness to an untimely grave. Nor shall I present to you a picture of the many families, once prosperous and happy, whom it has reduced to penury and shame. I shall not attempt to detail the countless enormities, to the perpetration of which it has led; nor need I conduct you to our jails, and penitentiaries, and hospitals, to make you sensible how numerous are its victims, and how bitter are its fruits. That intemperance is an evil of fearful magnitude; that it is spreading desolation

and misery through society; that it is exerting a most powerful influence in withstanding the progress of the gospel, and is bringing much reproach upon the church of Christ,—these things are admitted and deplored. What then is to be done? Are we to fold up our arms in supineness and sloth, and permit the tide of desolation to roll on? No! It is high time to awake out of sleep. A powerful effort is now in progress to stay this alarming evil, and in the result the friends of humanity and religion cannot but feel most deeply interested.

The evil of intemperance in the use of ardent spirit has all along been openly condemned. Both from the pulpit and from the press a warning voice has been raised against it. But while a species of opposition has been waged against the evil, it was in former times admitted by common consent, that the moderate use of ardent spirit, as a comfort of life, was allowable and right. And the consequence has been, that under this mode of opposition, the evil has continued to strike its roots deeper and still deeper in society, and its baleful fruits have been multiplied to a fearful extent. And if any thing can be learned from past experience, we are warranted to conclude, that so long as the principle of “moderate use” is contended for and acted upon, let men say what they may about the evil of intemperance, it will prevail. So it has been in times past, and so we may reasonably conclude it will be in time to come.

The want of success which attended all former efforts to suppress intemperance, has led to an inquiry whether this failure is not attributable to something defective in the plan of operation. The result of this inquiry has been the adoption of the principle, that to declaim against intemperance and yet plead for “moderate drinking,” is to do nothing more than simply to lop off some of the outer branches, while the trunk and root of the evil remain untouched. **IN THE SCHOOL OF MODERATE USE, DRUNKARDS RECEIVE THEIR TUITION.** I am not to be understood as saying, that all who have practised upon the principle of moderate use, have actually become drunkards. But we all know, that in relation to very many, this is the truth. One thing, however, is certain. It is here they take their first lessons; and were there no scholars in the school of moderate use, society would no longer be burdened with drunkards. The principle, then, on which the Temperance reformation is based, is, that the common use of ardent spirit, as a drink, is to be abandoned. And such, it is believed, is the only principle on which intemperance can be successfully opposed.

We, my brethren, are so situated that we cannot remain neutral, in relation to this matter. Every individual in society has some degree of influence, and ours will be exerted either in favor of, or against, the

great effort which is in progress throughout the world to put down a most fearful evil. As rational men, as men who wish well to the human race, and above all, as the followers of Him, of whom it is said, that he went about doing good, it becomes us to examine the ground on which we stand. If the principle on which the Temperance reformation rests, has the sanction of God's word; and if experience demonstrates that its operation is conducive to the best interests of society, it surely deserves our cordial and zealous support. But if not, if it involves any thing hostile to the spirit of the bible, let it be rejected. Let none however condemn, without careful examination.

Guided by the principle laid down by the apostle, it shall be my object,

I. To show that, even granting the moderate use of ardent spirit as a drink, to be proper in itself, yet if such use of it, on our part, has a tendency to lead others into sin, we should abstain, lest we make a brother to offend.

And then,

II. I shall advance a step further, and endeavor to make it appear, that in the moderate use there is something improper, therefore much more should we abstain.

If the first of these positions shall be established, our way to the general conclusion at which I aim, will be open. But if the second shall likewise be sustained, my conclusion would seem to rest on an immovable basis.

I. My first position, then, is, that, admitting the lawfulness of the moderate use of ardent spirit, yet if our use of it have a tendency to lead others into sin, we should abstain lest we make a brother to offend. The question under the consideration of the apostle, it has already been observed, relates to the eating of meats which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol. The lawfulness of using such meats, on the part of the Christian who understands the vanity of idolatry, is admitted. But there was no obligation on any one to use such meats. To abstain, therefore, could involve no one in guilt. And whatever might be the fact with some, others could not without sin partake. For, in consequence of the imperfection of their knowledge, they were under the impression, that in partaking of such flesh, they paid some religious respect to the idol, to whom it had been offered, and therefore by using

it they would involve themselves in the guilt of idolatry. Now, therefore, says the apostle, not directly on my own account, but for the sake of my brethren, I will use no flesh, lest my example should lead them into a practice which would involve them in guilt. Now, to apply this principle to the subject before us, let me suppose for the present, that the common, moderate use of ardent spirit is allowable; it will not surely be maintained by any, that there lies upon us an obligation to make such use of it. There can be no evil, then, in abstinence. But all past experience demonstrates that there are many in society who cannot indulge in the use, without using to excess. By occasional use, a vitiated taste is acquired, which cries incessantly, give, give. When, by the habit of using, a man has contracted a fondness for ardent spirit, a taste only serves to excite a morbid appetite, and he must have more. For such a man the only rational hope of safety is in entire abstinence. And while there are many in society, already in this perilous condition, the most temperate, by a little tuition in the school of moderate use, may be brought into it. If, therefore, I practise upon the principle of moderate use, though possibly I may not become a drunkard myself, yet I set an example which, to the whole extent of my influence, encourages others to pursue a course which has a tendency to lead them into sin. Therefore, according to the sentiment of the apostle, since, without any injury to myself, I can abstain from the use of ardent spirit, I will drink none while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

But will some one say, "There are many who abuse our necessary food and indulge in gluttony. According to your reasoning, we ought to abstain from the moderate use of food, lest our example should encourage the glutton, to eat to excess." My reply is, the cases are not parallel. Food is, by the ordinance of God, absolutely necessary in the present state for the support of life. It is, therefore, the duty of every man to use food with moderation, and it would be directly sinful to adopt the principle of abstinence from food, because its direct tendency would be to destroy the life which God has given us. Not so, however, with ardent spirit. No sober man will pretend that it is an absolute duty to use it. All that the devotee of Bacchus himself will contend for is, that there is no harm in taking a little; that it may be used in moderation. It is in no degree necessary to the health or vigor of the healthy system. The use of it, then, may be dispensed with. All reasoning, therefore, from the use of nourishing food to the use of ardent spirit is inconclusive, because the cases are entirely dissimilar.

In the observations which have hitherto been offered, I have taken it

for granted, that even supposing the moderate use of ardent spirit to be allowable, there can be no evil in entire abstinence. It might appear, however, from the manner in which some express themselves, that they would have some hesitation in admitting the correctness of this principle. A remark or two may, therefore, be proper for the purpose of exhibiting this matter in its true light.

It will be admitted that the moderate use of wine is recognized in the bible as allowable. But we are informed in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah, that for some particular reason, Jonathan the son of Rechab, laid an injunction upon his family to abstain from the use of wine. From respect for his authority, the family of Jonathan, religiously regarded his direction, and heaven approved their conduct. *Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Jonathan the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.* This portion of sacred history is not adduced to prove, that we are under obligation to abstain from the use of wine or of ardent spirit, but to show that in abstinence there is no evil. The Rechabites adopted the principle of total abstinence, from respect for the authority of their father, and heaven approved their conduct. While, therefore, we are warranted by this portion of scripture in saying, that there can be no evil in abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors; if our use of them have a tendency to lead others into sin, the principle of the apostle would teach us to say, If drink make my brother to offend, I will drink none while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

II. In the remarks hitherto advanced, we have proceeded upon the supposition that the moderate use of ardent spirits is proper. Let us now advance a step further, and inquire into the correctness of this supposition. And here suffer me to remark, that some in their zeal in opposing an evil have made declarations in no degree necessary to the support of our cause, and to which I am by no means prepared to subscribe. I have no hesitation in admitting that ardent spirit may be termed a good creature of God, in the same sense in which a thousand other things are, which by human art are prepared out of the productions of nature, and which in various ways are useful to man. "If, then," some one will say—"If, then, ardent spirit is a good creature of God, is it not, according to the apostle, to be received with thanksgiving?" Most certainly, it should be thankfully received for the purpose for which it was intended. But for what particular purpose this and the various other creatures of God are good, the words of the apostle do not inform us. They are all good and answer some valuable end in God's government. But every good thing is not good for every thing. The rocks, which lie on the bosom of the earth, are the creatures of

God, and they are good; but are they, therefore, good for food? The briny water of the ocean is a good creature of God; is it, therefore, good for the purpose of satisfying our thirst? This abused declaration of the apostle, decides nothing at all with regard to the propriety of using ardent spirit as a common drink. Ardent spirit is to be regarded as a good creature of God, just in the same sense as arsenic, or laudanum, or calomel, or such like medicinal preparations. These are all good when kept in their proper place, and are to be received with thanksgiving. But are they, therefore, good for common use? Because they are sometimes necessary and useful, shall we, therefore, in health take a portion of them in connection with our daily meals? While, under particular circumstances, a portion of these might be of great advantage to the human system, the common use of them would be hurtful and even destructive to life.

It is, therefore, a perversion of scripture and an abuse of reason to say, "Ardent spirit is a good creature of God, and therefore it is proper to be used as a common drink." Hemlock is a good creature of God, but shall we therefore have it served up on our table? To determine whether ardent spirit is good to be used as a common drink, we must inquire into its nature, and properties, and effects upon the human system. Out of the ground the Lord God has caused to grow a great variety of vegetables. Some of these we use for food, while others are not used. But they are all the creatures of God, and why do we make a distinction? Because from an examination of their nature and properties, some of them are found to be nourishing while others are poisonous. By the same rule are we to be guided in determining the question, whether the use of ardent spirit as a common drink is proper. What are its properties, and what are its effects upon the human system? And here we have no difficulty. It is a well-known fact, that ardent spirit contains a powerful poison. And those men whose profession requires them to make the animal system the subject of their study, and who have the best opportunity of knowing, with remarkable harmony concur in the opinion, that the common use of ardent spirit is hurtful to the human constitution. It may be, for aught I know, that some very respectable physicians would not be willing to express their concurrence in this opinion. But without intending any disrespect to a very useful and respectable profession, I may be permitted to say, that it is with some physicians just as it is with some clergymen. They have so long cultivated a familiar acquaintance with ardent spirit, that there exists betwixt them a friendly feeling, and they are slow to bear testimony against an old companion and friend. But I think it is now conceded by the great body of intelligent and scientific physicians, both

in Europe and America, that ardent spirit is of no advantage to man in health, but on the other hand, that the tendency of the common use of it is injurious. "If," says Sir Astley Cooper, "If the poor could see the white livers, the dropsies, and the shattered nervous systems which I have seen, as the consequences of drinking, they would be aware, that *spirits* and *poisons* are synonymous terms." And before the Temperance question had generally occupied the public attention, our own distinguished countryman, Dr. Chapman, expressed himself in the following manner: "As to the habitual use of wine, except under very severe restrictions, it is a custom more honored in the breach than in the observance." And while his opinion is evidently against the common use even of wine, he says, "Compared with ardent spirits, the action of wine is infinitely less injurious in a state of health, and as a remedy in disease, it evinces the same superiority. The effect it produces is slower and more permanent, combining also qualities, which, while they blunt the ardency of the stimulus, afford no inconsiderable portion of nutriment, by which the system is sustained and invigorated."

With regard to the use of ardent spirits, even as a medicine, his decision is, that they should be used only when wine cannot be had; and he considers it the duty of every medical practitioner, to discountenance the popular notion of their remedial efficacy.*

To produce an abundance of similar testimonies would be an easy matter, but it is unnecessary. I take it then to be the settled judgment, not of selfish priests, nor of wild enthusiasts, but of those who are competent to decide, that ardent spirit is not only not necessary for the man in health, but its direct tendency is to enervate the animal functions, and to predispose the system to disease. Men frequently accustom themselves to the use of it, and thus, by a pernicious habit, create a kind of necessity for it under almost every variety of circumstances. And by a practice which is secretly undermining the vigor of their constitutions, they bring themselves into such a condition, that they imagine the use of ardent spirit is necessary, to enable them to withstand the effects of cold, and to brace the system under fatigue, and to support it under the pressure of heat. But these are the dreams of a disordered imagination. The matter has been fairly reduced to the test of experiment, and thousands who have made the trial can testify, that man in health does not need the aid of ardent spirit, under cold, or heat, or fatigue, but, as a general fact, is better without it. If, then, experience proves that the common use of ardent spirit is hurtful

* Chapman's Therapeutics, Vol. 2, pp. 184—187.

to the health and vigor of the human constitution, if it has a tendency to predispose the system to disease, if it is insidious in its nature, and the use of it creates a fondness for it, which has a tendency to lead to excess, then there must be something wrong in the practice of using it as a comfort of life; and the spirit of that law, which forbids the taking away of our own life or the life of our neighbor unjustly, **OF WHATSOEVER TENDETH THEREUNTO**, requires that this practice should be abandoned.*

And such is the important object which the Temperance Society proposes to accomplish. By the power of persuasion and of argument, it proposes to prevail upon men to abandon the use of an article, which is not only not necessary to their well-being, but which when used as a common drink, as has been the custom, is positively injurious. And how desirable to the patriot, the philanthropist, and the Christian, must be the accomplishment of this object? If intemperance can be suppressed, how broad and deep a fountain of human misery will then be dried up? How formidable an obstacle to the general prosperity of society and the advancement of godliness, would then be removed? Those who have not with some attention examined the subject, would be amazed by a faithful exhibition of the amount of evils resulting from this one source. With a view to collect facts upon the subject, an investigation has been made throughout a sister state [New-York], as to the influence of intemperance in producing pauperism and crime. And as a specimen, suffer me to mention the result of this investigation, with regard to one particular county [Schenectady]. In the course of one year [1832], the number of individuals committed to jail for various offences, was *one hundred and forty-five*. Of these, not less than *one hundred and seven* were known to be intemperate. During the same year, *one hundred and seventeen* persons were sent to the poor-house. And of this number, *ninety-four* were intemperate. If this be allowed to be a fair specimen, (and it is believed that a careful inquiry throughout our country would lead to the conclusion, that it does not exaggerate the evil influence of intemperance,) then, how fearful is the amount of crime, and pauperism, and wretchedness, produced by this one evil! And when the subject is viewed in the light of facts, how loudly is every individual called, who has the good of society and the well-being of man at heart, to exert whatever influence he may possess, in the extirpation of this evil, whose character is Apollyon and whose name is Legion.

It is the remark of one of the most eminent lawyers our country has ever produced, and, besides, a pious man, "I have been for more than forty years, a close observer of life and manners, in various parts of

*See Note A., page 64.

these United States, and I know of no evil that will bear a moment's comparison with intemperance." And he adds, "I am persuaded that if we could have a statistical survey and report of the affairs of unhappy families and individuals, with the causes of their misery annexed, we should find nine cases out of ten, if not a still greater proportion, resulting from the use of ardent spirits alone." Some will no doubt regard this estimate of the relative influence of intemperance in the production of human misery, as too high. But when it is borne in mind, that this is the language of the lamented Wirt, it will be admitted that few have had better opportunities of observation, and that no one was more competent to form a correct opinion.

But while all reasonable men will admit, that it is the imperative duty of every good citizen, as well as of every consistent Christian, to yield his zealous aid in the suppression of intemperance, there are yet some who object to the plan proposed by the Temperance society, for the accomplishment of this object. And what is the general character of this plan? The Temperance society proposes to form voluntary associations of men, who shall pledge themselves to each other to abstain from the common use of ardent spirit, that so by the moral influence of their example, they may operate upon the community and produce an abandonment of that evil custom, which gives rise to all the drunkenness which prevails in the land. Now if it be allowable in itself, for a man to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors, it surely cannot be wrong to express his resolution to do so. And this he does by uniting himself with a Temperance society. He pursues no improper end; he embraces no unsound principle; he brings himself under no unlawful obligation, but in a public manner expresses his purpose to do that which is proper in itself, that the light of his example may shine for the benefit of others. And in this course is he not fully sustained by that precept of the gospel, which requires, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works?*

But against the Temperance society it is objected, that there is no authority in the bible for such an institution. This objection supposes that the Temperance society claims to be regarded as a divine ordinance. If such a claim were set up, it would then be a reasonable demand, "Where is your divine authority?" For every ordinance which we observe as an institution of religion, and for every exercise of religious worship in which we engage, we ought to be able to produce our divine authority. I admit, therefore, that if the Temperance society claimed to be a divine ordinance, the want of divine authority would be fatal to it. But such is not the fact, and consequently the objection has no bearing upon the subject. It is not pretended that we have any command

in the bible to form such a society, nor do we call upon men to enter it as a religious institution. The end to which the operations of the society are directed, is the promotion of temperance; an end every where recommended throughout the bible. But there has existed in the community a pernicious custom, which exerts an influence directly hostile to the cause of temperance; that is the custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink. To accomplish her ulterior object, the promotion of temperance, the society, in the first place, directs her energies to the abolition of this evil custom. And while the object proposed to be accomplished is one which the bible recommends, the principle on which the society proceeds is fully sustained by the authority of the bible, which requires that we *abstain from all appearance of evil*.

It results from the constitution of our nature as social beings, that we associate together and combine our energies for the accomplishment of any important object. To accomplish effects which require great physical strength, men associate together and unite their strength. United, they are able to accomplish with ease, what would otherwise be impossible. The same principle holds in relation to the operation of moral causes and effects. The moral influence of one good example can do something, and the united influence of two can do more. Now, there exists in our land a great moral evil, intemperance. It is spreading desolation in every direction, covering society with penury and wretchedness, and the church with shame. This evil has waxed great and is become exceedingly powerful. It owes its origin to the pernicious custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink. How shall we undertake to destroy it? It is a principle of common sense, that we should with united front advance to meet the common enemy. By associating together, by uniting the moral influence of our example, by concentrating our energies, we can do more than can possibly be effected in any other mode. And in this concentration of our efforts for the common good, we act in entire accordance with the spirit of that precept of the gospel, which requires that we consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works. Now, while common sense, as well as the general principles of the bible, would direct us to pursue such a course, to unite our energies for the accomplishment of an important common object, what is the result of the experiment which has been made? A revolution in the customs of society has been effected. The common use of ardent spirit has been well nigh banished from cultivated society and to a surprising and most gratifying extent, the tide of intemperance has been stayed.* But it will be said,

“The church is a Temperance society of divine appointment, and it

*See Note B, page 64.

is an insult offered to the wisdom of God, to suppose that a human institution can suppress intemperance if the church cannot." This objection would be of some force, if the Temperance society were set up in opposition to the church, or were invested with authority over the church, or presumed to take out of the hands of the church her own concerns. But no such thing will be pretended. Without presuming to interfere with any thing which lies within the peculiar province of the church, the Temperance society comes forward in the character of an humble assistant in the common work of doing good. It is readily admitted that the church is a Temperance society, and so far as her appropriate influence is exerted, it is in favor of temperance. But still it is a deplorable fact, that intemperance exists within the visible church as well as in the world. The humbling evidence of its existence may be seen in the bloated appearance of many a reverend visage, as well as in the irregularities of many a private member. If any help, then, can be afforded to the church in the extirpation of this evil, is the offer of it any insult either to the church or to her risen Head? If the Temperance society, without interfering with the authority of the church, is willing to co-operate with her in the promotion of a common object, intimately connected with the good of society and the interests of religion, what evil can result from this co-operation? Shall the church indulge a spirit of jealousy, lest she should be deprived of the exclusive honor of reforming society? Nay, after the church and every other benevolent society shall have done all that they are able to accomplish, there will still remain much evil, both in the church and in the world, over which the spirit of humanity and religion will be called to mourn.

But that we may understand the true character of this objection, let us examine how it will work.

The church may with equal propriety be said to be an Education society. It is her special duty to see that her youth are instructed in the principles of true wisdom. What then? May we send our children no where else but to the church to receive instruction? Is the system of common schools, for the instruction of youth, to be abandoned? Though we do not plead divine appointment for the establishment of a common school, or a college, or a theological seminary, yet may not these institutions afford important aid to the church in training up her youth for future usefulness? According to the character of the objection we are considering, the church being an Education society, all those institutions which have not divine appointment on their side, established for the purpose of banishing ignorance, and for the diffusion of correct knowledge, ought to be abolished.

I admit most willingly, that the church is the most efficient associa-

tion for the promotion of temperance, which exists in the world, and that the Temperance society is not for a moment to be placed upon a level with her. And I admit further, that if the church would carry faithfully into practice, the principles delivered to her by her glorious Head, in so far as her own members are concerned, there would be no need for another. But in reply, I would offer two remarks for consideration.

1. The affairs of the visible church are administered by fallible men, and sometimes evil customs creep into the church, which are tolerated by public opinion, and there, to the great discredit of religion, they are permitted to grow. Under such circumstances, the interests of religion call for reformation. Precisely such is the fact, in the present case. The pernicious custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink, has found its way into the church. Both ministers and people have too long and too generally acted upon the principle, that "there is no harm in taking a little." And the school of moderate use, set up within the sacred precincts of the church of Christ, has trained up, Oh! how many drunkards, both among the clergy and laity. Because of these things the friends of Zion have been called to mourning and humiliation before God.

It was necessary, then, by some means to correct an abuse which had crept into the church—not to correct any thing in the organization of the church as ordained of God; nothing in the system of worship divinely instituted; nothing in the form of sound doctrine delivered to her; but something which human depravity had introduced. And the principles of truth operating through the instrumentality of the Temperance society, have, in divine providence, been made effectual in directing public attention to the subject, and in producing, to a good extent, a most desirable reformation.

2. The Temperance society, in an especial manner, proposes to operate upon the world at large. The christian is a member of the civil community as well as of the church. And while there are particular duties resulting from the relation he sustains to the church, in the performance of which he is to be faithful, he is, by all lawful means, to promote the good of the community around him. Intemperance is an evil, not only inconsistent with Christianity, but hostile to the good of society. If, then, the christian can prevail upon the man who is not connected with the church, to unite with him, upon proper principles, in promoting the cause of temperance, he may thus do good to the individual himself, and in connection with him may promote the general good of society. Why then should they not unite? In the church they cannot co-operate, because one of the parties is not connected

with it. But in the Temperance society they may come together, without any sacrifice of principle on the part of the Christian. And not only is there no sacrifice of principle, but the gain is evidently on the side of Christianity. In the Temperance society we meet upon the broad principles of the bible, and for the promotion of an object which the bible every where recommends. And thus we have an opportunity of doing good to those to whom in the church we could not have access. And the apostolic direction is, *As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

In conclusion, while it becomes the philanthropist to rejoice in the success with which heaven has crowned the efforts of the Temperance society, I would, with all affection, caution the friends of the Temperance reform, against the use of extravagant language in representing the success of our efforts, and against the adoption of unauthorized measures for the promotion of the cause. A good cause is often injured by the imprudence of friends, whose zeal outruns their discretion. When it is said that "the Temperance society has saved more souls from perdition—has done more to promote the conversion of sinners than the preaching of the gospel"—when such unguarded declarations drop from the lips of men, who understand not what they say nor whereof they affirm, sober minds are disgusted, and the ear of intelligent piety is shocked. The Temperance society sets up no claim to divine institution, nor does she profess to have power to change the human heart. She professes to be actuated by something of that spirit of benevolence, for which the Author of our religion was so eminently distinguished. And she desires to perform her part in promoting the general good of society. She is, moreover, perfectly willing that her principles and plan of operations be tried by the word of God. And while the friends of the Temperance reform labor to promote the cause, let them be careful to disclaim every principle, and to discard every measure, which has not the sanction of the bible; being assured that no system of benevolence can ultimately prevail to the good of society, which is not in accordance with the principles of divine revelation. Amen.

NOTE A. A man who has long accustomed himself to the use of ardent spirit may feel as though it was necessary for him, and may have some difficulty in believing that he could dispense with the use of it without sustaining injury. But let him have the resolution to make the experiment, and he will discover his mistake. We are frequently told, that, we who spend our time in the retirement of the study, are not competent to decide what is necessary for those who have to undergo great bodily labor under the heat of the sun. "You, who are employed among books in the shade, may do very well without the aid of any such stimulus; but we, who toil in the field under the scorching rays of the sun, find that a little ardent spirit is absolutely necessary." I have no doubt that some who use this language believe what they say; but I have as little doubt, that they are entirely mistaken, and that, in fact, the remedy to which they resort really tends to aggravate the disease. And how is the question at issue to be decided? Our appeal is to facts.

Iuring a recent excursion through this and some adjoining counties, a favorable opportunity was enjoyed for collecting some facts on this subject, which may deserve the attentive consideration of the candid. The late harvest was, up to the whole, what our farmers call a "heavy one." The heat of the summer, we all know, was unusually intense. And yet many of our farmers in Allegheny, Washington and Fayette counties, through which I passed, have harvested their large crops of grain without the aid of a drop of ardent spirit. Many, even of those who are not members of the Temperance Society, used none at all, because the custom of taking the bottle to the field in harvest is fast growing into disrepute. Now, these men have made trial of both usages, and they have that knowledge which is the result of experience on both sides. They are consequently more competent to decide, than those who have never made trial of abstinence. And what is their testimony? It is, without a single exception, so far as my observation extends, to the following purport. "Since we have discontinued the use of ardent spirit during the harvest, we find our work is done better—fewer accidents occur—the conduct of the laborers is much more quiet, orderly and agreeable—there are fewer instances of the men giving out, being overcome, either by heat or by labor—they drink less water—have a better appetite for their food, and perform more labor in a given time." Facts are stubborn things, and one of them weighs heavier in the scale of reason than a thousand speculations or suppositions.

NOTE B. The question is sometimes asked with a sneering air, "And after all the noise that has been made, what has the Temperance Society done?" I answer Under the blessing of Heaven, the Temperance Society has been instrumental, in effecting to a considerable extent, a most important revolution in the habits of society. And here, again, we ask those who are disposed to be incredulous, to look at facts.

Let the following be mentioned, as a specimen of the salutary change in the habits of cultivated society, which may be traced to the benevolent efforts of the Temperance Society. During the month of April last, the writer of this note spent some time in a pleasant visit among a numerous circle of relatives and acquaintances, residing in that beautiful section of country west of the Great Miami, in the state of Ohio. In every instance, he was most kindly received and most hospitably entertained. But in not a single instance, was a drop of ardent spirit presented. But a few years since, and probably not one of these families, though a people of temperate habits, would have been without a supply of some kind of ardent spirit. Or if any of them had happened to be found without it, they would have thought it necessary to make many apologies for their inability to furnish a suitable evidence of their hospitality. I do not mention this as a thing which is singular, but because it came under my own observation. Facts of a similar kind may be seen in all parts of our country. Still, I admit, that much remains yet to be done. Intemperance is still lamentably prevalent. And when it is remembered how many good men, and even ministers of the gospel, plead for and set the example of "moderate use," it is rather a matter of surprise that the evil is not more prevalent. What has already been accomplished, however, may well cheer and encourage the philanthropist, and stimulate him to go forward in his work of faith and labor of love.