

Wingfield
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REASONS

FOR NOT JOINING

THE TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.

BY A CLERGYMAN.
C. R.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

RICHMOND:

1836.

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T. W. WHITE, Printer,

Main Street, Richmond,



The following communication was made to the elders of the writer's congregation at their request. They, supposing that it might be useful to others, desired its publication. In submitting it, therefore, to the public, a regard was had more to the opinions of others, than the writer's own. He has no desire to provoke, and sincerely hopes to avoid controversy. He was asked to give his reasons for not joining the Temperance Society, which he has done freely and candidly, without intention of giving offence to any. That they will be approved by all he cannot expect. If, however, the exercise of a greater degree of charity towards himself and others who think with him on the subject of this communication, be promoted by its publication, much would be gained; and for this he may reasonably hope.

REASONS, &c.

DEAR BRETHREN:—

You request that I should give you the reasons which have hitherto determined me not to become a member of the Temperance Society. Such a request, coming from the representatives of a respectable congregation, over which I have so long presided as pastor, is entitled to respect; especially as they seem to think, that a communication of the reasons that have governed me in the course I have taken in relation to this institution, may be of service to them in their official capacity as elders of the congregation. Whether any importance can be attached to such a communication, I shall not determine; it is sufficient for me that I am requested to make it. Every person has, I suppose, or ought to have, some reasons for the course he has pursued in respect to this Society: I have mine, and these I proceed to lay before you, agreeably to your request.

It has been truly said that we live in an extraordinary age. The number of benevolent societies, both of a political and moral nature, that have sprung up among us, gives to our time a character quite new and different from any former period. But of all the associations of the day, there is none so extraordinary in its character, or that has been pressed on public attention with so much zeal, as the Temperance Society. Indeed, such has been the zeal for the promotion of its interests, that some of the most unwarrantable and pernicious opinions have been advanced and advocated with a pertinacity truly astonishing. Such, indeed, has been the zeal for this institution, that neither piety nor sobriety has secured from censure those who dared to refuse it their support.

The Temperance Society aims at reformation, not by calling men off from excess in the use of ardent spirit, but from its use altogether. It enjoins entire abstinence. It allows of no middle ground between the use and abuse of spirituous liquors. It proscribes the means of intoxication, and proposes to make men

sober by putting it out of their power to be intemperate. A plan of reformation so novel, has excited much attention, and produced various feelings and sentiments in the public mind in relation to this institution. Some have condemned, and others have approved it. Many good men, although they did not object to the design of promoting temperance by an association, nevertheless questioned the correctness of the plan upon which the Society is founded. While others, intent only on its object, and overlooking, or not duly considering the means by which it is to be accomplished, gave at once to the Society all their support.

It would, indeed, be greatly desirable, if the odious and dreadful vice of drunkenness could be suppressed. But how is this to be effected? It is said, by societies founded on the principle of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit. This plan, then, being presented to the public, it is the right of all freely and fairly to examine its merits.

When this Society first made its appearance, I viewed it as a well intended, but, to say the least, a doubtful effort to put down a pernicious vice: and although I could not perceive its probable utility, was however, not disposed to throw any impediment in the way of its making a fair experiment. But when in its progress, I was led to examine its principles more fully, I was compelled to depart from the neutral ground I had taken, and to resist the extravagant claims it had set up to public patronage.

There is no person, who would more heartily rejoice to see intemperance of every description entirely abolished, or who would more readily engage in any lawful enterprise to accomplish this object, than myself. Although the cause of temperance is important; yet caution should be observed, lest, in our zeal for its promotion, we should be betrayed into unjustifiable measures. For my own part, I have not as yet adopted the opinion, that the *end* justifies the *means*.

I am asked, why I have not joined the Temperance Society, founded on the principle of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit. My answer is contained in the following particulars. In the first place the joining of the Society, is not ne-

cessary for my sobriety. Secondly, the temperate use of ardent spirit, is not an example injurious to the sobriety of others. Thirdly, I have not confidence in the expediency of the Society's plan of reformation. Fourthly, the measures that have been adopted for its promotion I consider dangerous and mischievous.

1. *The joining of the Society is not necessary for my sobriety.* Now, the professed object of this institution, is to promote temperance. If this object, then, is accomplished, all that it has in view is attained. Now, why should I join the Society with a view to preserve my own temperance, when, for more than fifty years, I have been strictly sober without the aid of any institution of this kind? It is evident, therefore, that I do not now need the aid of it, and, consequently, to join it with a view to my own personal advantage, would be entirely unnecessary. But, if it should be said, that my becoming a member of the Society, would bring me under an obligation of abstinence, which would be a further and better security for my future temperance, I reply, that if entire abstinence should ever become necessary for my sobriety, the joining of the Society can afford me no better security for the practice of it, than my own sense of duty as a Christian, and obligations as a member of the Church of Christ. As a professed Christian, I feel myself bound to adopt all proper and necessary measures by which my own sobriety can be promoted, whether by abstinence or any other means, and am under the most powerful motives to observe them. The Bible enjoins temperance in all things, and forbids drunkenness under the penalty of the displeasure of Almighty God, and exclusion of the intemperate, not only from the society of believers, but from the kingdom of heaven. Now, when a person joins the church, he brings himself under an obligation to obey all the laws of Christ, of which the injunction to be temperate is not the least, and has all the motives for obedience that can be furnished. The fear of God, the love of Christ, a regard for his own reputation as a Christian, the prosperity of the church, and his eternal salvation, are all brought to bear on his mind. If such motives as these are not sufficient to preserve the temperance of the members of the church, none are sufficient. Does the Temperance Society bring its members under stronger

obligations to lead temperate lives, than a professed subjection to Christ? Is a promise made to the Society more sacred or more binding, than the authority of God? Has the Society greater or more awful penalties to inflict on drunkards, or greater rewards to offer to the temperate, than are held out in the Bible? Nothing, certainly, can be added to the strength of the obligations of a member of the Church to the performance of his duty; for they are as strong as they can be made. The pledge of the Society, would not add the weight of a feather to his motive for obedience. He has given a higher and stronger pledge. Before God and man he has sworn allegiance to Christ. As Aaron's rod swallowed up all the Magician's rods, so this pledge swallows up all other pledges. If, therefore, a member of the Church could not be bound to sobriety by his obligations both to Christ and to the Church, neither could he be by his obligations to the Society. If the greater pledge will not bind him, surely the less cannot.

As the Society, then, can give me no better security for the preservation of my temperance, than the obligations under which, as a professed Christian, I am at present placed, I see no reason for joining this institution for the sake of my own advantage. Nor do I perceive the necessity of joining it for the benefit of others. For,

2. *The temperate use of ardent spirit is not an example injurious to the sobriety of others.*—Such a use of it as may in no wise unfit a person for the due performance of the duties of life, is here meant by a temperate use. No other use can be justly considered a temperate use. If a man, then, who uses ardent spirit temperately, does an injury to others, it must be by way of his example. Now, it is readily conceded, if the example of such a man is injurious, that he is bound to abandon its use, whether he joins the Society or not: For every man is accountable for all the mischief which proceeds from his bad example.

Much has been said about the use of ardent spirit as a drink, as setting a bad example. There are two things, either of which would constitute its use such an example, viz. that the use of it be in itself unlawful, or being lawful in itself, that it be used unlawfully. Now is the use of ardent spirit as a drink,

unlawful in itself? This question must be decided by the infallible word of God, and not by the doctrines and commandments of men. The right to use any creature for food or drink, must be derived from a divine grant, for this reason, that God is the proprietor of all things. If there be, then, no grant from him, of his creatures, the use of them is unquestionably unlawful. For no one has a right to use that which is not his own, without the permission of the proprietor. The first grant was made before the fall, by which God gave to man the right to use for food every creature, except animals. But this grant was afterwards enlarged, and extended to animals also, with the exception of their blood. It is true, that there were many beasts the flesh of which the Jews were by the ceremonial law forbidden to eat: but these laws did not extend to other nations. But, upon the introduction of Christianity the reasons of these prohibitions ceased, and the distinction between clean and unclean things has consequently been abolished. "I know I am," saith the Apostle, "persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." Rom. 14. 14. "Not that which goeth into the mouth" says Christ, "defileth a man." Mat. 15. 11. There is nothing then, according to the Scriptures unclean or unlawful in itself; and, consequently, every creature may be used without distinction. "Every creature of God," 1 Tim. 4. 4. "is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Could any words more clearly than these convey a grant of every creature, for man's use? Every creature then without exception, is declared *good*, and *nothing* to be refused. If ardent spirit, then, be, as it undoubtedly is, of the number of God's creatures, it is also granted, and its use is consequently lawful in itself. The right to use it stands precisely on the same footing as the right to use meat or any thing else for food or drink; for both are founded only on a divine grant. If, therefore you shake the right to the one, you shake the right to the other. By what authority is meat eaten? It is not derived from its useful and nourishing quality, by which human life is supported. Upon this ground we have no title at all. But it is derived exclusively from a divine grant. In consequence of his apostacy, man has forfeited his right to every

thing, and, without a special grant from his Creator, he is entitled to the use of no creature whatever. Although the use of ardent spirit is lawful in itself; yet it may be used unlawfully. That is the case, when it is used to excess. Excess is unlawful only because it injures health; and disqualifies for the performance of every duty of life. But if ardent spirit is temperately used, that is, if it is used without these injurious effects, it is used lawfully. Now, it is asked, upon what principle of reason or religion can that man be condemned who uses ardent spirit temperately? Will it be said, by setting a bad example? He uses what the Bible allows, and in the way in which the Bible permits it to be used. To set a bad example there must be some wrong conduct. But the conduct in the case in question, is the temperate use of ardent spirit, which has been shewn to be lawful. Can the lawful use be wrong? Can that example be bad which, if followed, would suppress drunkenness, and thus accomplish the professed object of the Temperance Society?

But it is said *that ardent spirit is not a creature of God; and therefore that the right to use it, cannot be claimed under a divine grant.* If it is not God's creature, it certainly is not granted; for he grants nothing but what is his own. But why may it not be considered God's creature? Because alcohol is obtained, it is said, by the mere art of man—by distillation; and therefore it is not properly God's creature. But how does distillation produce it? Distillation does not create it: for this is the work of fermentation, which is a natural process. By distillation it is only separated from the fermented liquor in which it existed before it was distilled. While, then, it remains in the fermented liquor it is a creature of God, but if it be separated from it, it is no longer, it is said, his creature. It is, or it is not, then, a creature of God at the pleasure of the distiller. This indeed is wonderful. Now according to this notion, we are in the daily use of many things for which we have no divine warrant. Such, for example, as sugar, salt, butter; for they like alcohol, are obtained by the art of separating them from various subjects in which they are found,—sugar from the cane; salt, from water; butter, from milk. But, as these are now discovered not to be

the creatures of God, we have no right to use them under a divine grant:—a new and important discovery, which does honor to the age in which we live. For, by it, a great deal of sin may be avoided in future, by totally discontinuing the use of them, as the gifts of heaven. For, to use things as God's gifts which he has not granted, is highly immoral. And it is expected, therefore, that they who urge this objection, will be the first to abstain from the use of such things, as their example will be more likely to obtain belief of their sincerity, than their precept. Is it not remarkable, however, that if ardent spirit is not a creature of God, that it should be agreed, that it is allowable as medicine? Is it then a creature of God when taken medicinally, and not as a drink? Is it God's creature according to the use to which it is put? Receive it as a medicine, and immediately it becomes his creature; and its use is lawful. Take it as a drink, and it is not his creature, and therefore its use is unlawful. This is another new and wonderful discovery of the present age.

But this objection to the use of ardent spirit, that it is not a creature of God, can hardly be treated seriously, without giving it an importance to which it is not entitled. For, what can be more obviously absurd and unscriptural, than the idea, that God is not the creator of every thing? This idea could never have been entertained even by the most fanatical, but for the sake of evading the force of that text in Tim. 4. 4. which has been already referred to, and by which all things are granted for the use of man. Surely, a cause that needs to be supported by maintaining that God is not the creator of every thing, must be considered desperate.

But it is said, *that the use of ardent spirit, although lawful in itself, as it leads to abuse, is setting a bad example.* Is it, then, contended, that liableness to the abusing of a thing is a good reason for its disuse? This doctrine which has been so long exploded, being now revived, renders that cause suspicious into the service of which it is pressed. For, no cause that needs its aid can be regarded in a favorable point of view. But, who, however, does not see, that, if this principle is carried out to its full extent, it would lead to the most absurd and pernicious conse-

quences? What has not been abused by man? The food which he eats, and which is necessary for his subsistence, is abused to gluttony. Nay, Christianity itself, the best gift of heaven, has been so perverted, as to produce the greatest spiritual tyranny the world ever witnessed. But who will undertake to say, that the use of food should be laid aside? or that Christianity should be rejected, because it has been thus abused? If it is true, that ardent spirit should be entirely disused because it has been abused, it is true also that every thing else that is liable to abuse, should be laid aside. The principle is the same in both cases. *This* thing is liable to abuse, and, therefore it should be laid aside. *That* thing also is liable to abuse, and it likewise must be dispensed with. We may thus lay aside one thing after another, until we shall get rid of every thing. The establishing of such a principle as this would produce a greater evil than the one it was intended to prevent. Was it not this principle which led to those austerities that laid the foundation of monasteries? But, of the abominable abuses and corruptions which finally crept into these institutions, none can be ignorant.

But it is answered, *that ardent spirit is not a necessary of life, and being liable to great abuses, its use is a bad example.* But our Creator, in his munificence, gave us such things, as administer not only to our necessities, but also to our pleasures. These it must be confessed have been greatly abused. If we were confined to the use of things of mere necessity only, half of our pleasures and gratifications must be surrendered. The gratification of every sense, in which necessity is not concerned, would be setting a bad example. Wealth, the elegances of life, and many other things, though not absolutely necessary, conducing to the comfort and pleasure of human life, must all be given up; for all have been greatly abused. The world would be turned into one great monastery. Wine is not a necessary of life, and the abuse of it has produced the vilest drunkards. But the Psalmist recounts it among the blessings of heaven. "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine." And our Saviour turned water into wine at a wedding for the accommodation of the guests. Animal food is not absolutely necessary for the support of human life; and the

improper use of it has made the most odious gluttons. What is more dangerous than wealth? But shall we follow the example of the Theban, who for fear that his riches would ruin himself and others, threw them into the sea? or the advice of the Psalmist who said, "if riches increase, set not your heart on them?" If, then, the use of ardent spirit is setting a bad example, because it is not necessary, and because it is productive of evils; the use of other things which are not necessary and which are productive of evils, is also setting a bad example. There is no difference in the cases. And it would be inconsistent to say, the example would be bad in the one case and not in the other. One sees me drink ardent spirit temperately, and then gets drunk; another sees me drink wine temperately, and then drinks to excess. Now if any one should say, that I am accountable for the drunkenness of the one, and not for that of the other, he would be utterly inconsistent. For neither the use of wine, nor the use of ardent spirit is necessary for me. But I am not accountable for the intemperance of either; for in the case stated, I have used both wine and ardent spirit as they ought to have been used, that is temperately. Dreadful indeed would be the situation of that man, who is made accountable for all the evils which may arise from the improper use of unnecessary things, because he uses such things temperately. It would be better for that man to retire at once into a cave, and hide himself from the world.

But it is said, *that the temperate use of ardent spirit necessarily leads to abuse, and therefore is a bad example.* But if such a connexion exists between its use and abuse, such a connexion must also have existed between the use and abuse of the strong drink of the ancients and their wine. For there is nothing in the nature of one intoxicating drink, that necessarily produces abuse, that is not in the nature of another. Why then did not the Scriptures teach the necessity of entire abstinence from intoxicating drinks of every kind? Why did they not say *taste not, touch not* any strong drink, any thing that will intoxicate? Drunkenness was a common vice in the time of the writers of the Scriptures, and they as deeply regretted the evils of it as we do. But entire abstinence is no where enjoined

in the Bible as a duty incumbent on all. The Apostles condemned drunkenness, but did not forbid the use of that which produces intoxication. Such a prohibition would have at once converted the church into a Temperance Society on the principle of entire abstinence; and the formation of such societies at this time, would have been useless with respect to the members of the church. For every person who should become a member of it, would of course be a member of a Temperance Society, founded on the principle of entire abstinence. But that there were no churches founded by the Apostles on this principle, it is evident, from their exhortations and injunctions in relation to temperance, and warnings against drunkenness. The exhortation of the Apostle to the church at Ephesus "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess" (Ephes. 5. 18.) is an exhortation against excess only, and not against the use of wine, which would have been quite unsuitable if that church had been founded on the principle of entire abstinence. The exhortation of the Apostle would doubtless have been something like this, Drink no wine at all, for the use of it will necessarily lead to abuse. Unquestionably, if intoxicating drinks could not have been used without abuse, their use would have been forbidden, and total abstinence would have been enjoined by the Scriptures. But what is the fact? Has every person who has used ardent spirit as a drink, ultimately become a drunkard? It is true, that numbers who have begun in the moderate use of this, as well as of other intoxicating drinks, have ended in excess. But to say that it cannot be so used without ultimate intemperance, is to say that which is contrary to fact—contrary to the experience and testimony of thousands.

But again it is said, *as the use of ardent spirit grieves and stumbles weak brethren, its use is a bad example, and ought to be given up.* Christians, no doubt, may honestly take different views of what is, or is not allowable. Some may conscientiously eat and drink those things, which the conscience of others may compel them to refuse. If a man, however, uses that which, although lawful in itself he believes to be forbidden, he is guilty of sin. "For what is not of faith, is sin." The religious scruples of Christians should therefore be tenderly

regarded. But how far are they to be respected? Is it supposed, if some entertain scruples in regard to the use of certain things, the use of which things under certain circumstances is really lawful, that, in compliance with their scruples, all men are bound to abstain from these things under all circumstances? If you say this, you make the conscience of one man the measure of the conduct of another, which is contrary to Scripture. For, says the Apostle, "Why is my liberty judged of by another man's conscience." 1 Cor. 10. 29. Suppose a weak brother should say, that he conscientiously believed that it was sinful to use any kind of flesh for food, should we be bound in this case to lay aside the use of flesh altogether, from a regard to his scruples? If so the church would be brought under the greatest bondage. Her liberties and privileges must be surrendered to the scruples of weak and ignorant men. For in what period of its history was it ever destitute of persons who entertained extravagant notions on religious subjects. While, on one hand, things the most indifferent in themselves, have been magnified into the greatest importance; on the other, things of consequence have been whittled down into trifles. Some have placed religion in the length of the beard; others in the mode of salutation. By some even now the use of the blood of animals is considered as interdicted by the Scriptures; and great offence would be given if no regard was paid to their scruples. Some are offended at the use of ardent spirit; others at the use both of wine and of ardent spirit. Cases have occurred, where the conscience of one weak brother has come in conflict with that of another weak brother. One believes that he would be ungrateful to refuse ardent spirit; because he considers the refusal as spurning the gift of heaven; the other refuses it because of the mischief it has produced. He, then, that drinks it, while he satisfies his own conscience, injures the feelings of the other; and he that drinks not, while he satisfies his own conscience, grieves his brother. In the midst of these conflicting claims on our charity, how are we to act? If we shall refuse ardent spirit, although by using wine we may satisfy some; yet we shall grieve and offend others, if we do not reject both. And if we reject both we may still offend. All that charity re-

quires in relation to the religious scruples of weak brethren, is, that Christian liberty should be so used, that their feelings may not be wantonly wounded, and that no just cause of stumbling may be designedly put in their way.

But it is asked, does not the Scripture enjoin abstinence from every thing, the use of which may be the occasion of offending and stumbling the weak? Does not the Apostle say, "It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor any other thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Rom. 14, 21. And again, "wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will not eat flesh while the world standeth." 1 Cor. 8, 13. It is evident by comparing these texts of Scripture with the context, that nothing is taught in them, but the duty of so using Christian liberty, that no just cause of offence or stumbling should be given to weak Christians. For, certainly, the Apostle did not mean to teach, that meat should under *no circumstances* be used, because the improper use of it under *some circumstances*, had given cause of offence or stumbling. For the same Apostle in his epistle to Timothy reprobates the doctrine of abstinence from meats, and places it among the doctrines of devils. 1 Tim. 4, 4. But as the passages of Scripture just cited have been frequently urged for the support of the doctrine of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit, they deserve a more particular attention. In the Church of Rome, there was a contention about the use of meats. The foundation of it was this: some Jewish converts, and perhaps some other men under Jewish prejudices, were so weak in the faith, as to believe, that the ceremonial law with regard to the distinction of meats was still in force, and they refused to eat such meats as had been considered by that law as unclean. There were others, who believed that the ceremonial law was abolished, and who considered themselves at liberty to eat all kinds of meat without distinction. This difference of opinion between the parties led to serious consequences—to a breach of the peace of the Church. One party treated the other, as it would seem, with contempt, as weak and superstitious, that needlessly abstained from meats that were deemed unclean under the law, while the other condemned the opposite party as loose and irreligious. The

Apostle condemned both parties, and exhorted to peace and mutual forbearance. He condemned the one for judging, and the other for despising their brethren. And that he might lead them to the exercise of better tempers and dispositions, he shows the impropriety of judging each other; that every man was accountable to his own master; and reminds them that those who refused to eat meat, "were actuated from a principle of conscience towards God in obedience to what they believed to be still his command; and that those who did eat were governed also by a sincere aim to glorify Christ, who had granted them this liberty, and he would have them assert this privilege." For "he that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." Rom. 14. 6. But as the stronger Christians had so imprudently used their liberty in eating meat to the grief and offence of the weaker, the Apostle shows, that although there was nothing unclean in itself, the scruples of weak brethren should be respected, and caution observed in the exercise of their liberty. That if they used their liberty in such a manner as to grieve or stumble their weak brethren, they would act very improperly and uncharitably. For he says, "It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor any other thing, whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Now did the Apostle intend to teach, that the liberty of eating meat should be entirely taken away from the Church, because it had been improperly and offensively used, and that it should not be exercised under any circumstances whatever? This could not have been his intention, for he says, "hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." Rom. 14. 22. "That is, if the believer was persuaded that it was lawful to eat any kind of food, and not tied down to Jewish ordinances about meats, this persuasion of his Christian liberty is right, and he should hold it fast with respect to himself and his own use of it on all proper occasions to the glory of God, with a sincere conscience towards him, as in his sight and presence as a rule to himself, though not to them that are otherwise minded." (Gurse Paraphrase.) The Apostle here clearly teaches the Christians at Rome, that they were at liberty to eat on all proper occasions any kind of food, of

the lawfulness of the use of which they were fully persuaded in their own minds, and that this liberty should not be relinquished.

With regard to the text in Corinthians, "wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth," the meaning of the Apostle must be determined by the occasion of his thus expressing himself. He had been writing to the Corinthian Church on the subject of eating meat offered to idols. There were some weak brethren in that Church, who, having ventured to eat meat offered to idols, with an impression that they were joining in an idolatrous sacrifice, that they were eating it "as a thing offered to an idol," defiled their consciences. There were others, who, being more enlightened, regarded the idol as nothing; and consequently considered themselves as much at liberty to eat meat offered to an idol, as to eat meat under any other circumstances. And they went so far in the exercise of this liberty, as to eat even in the temple of the idol, and in the presence of weak brethren. This liberty the Apostle condemned as an injurious example, because it emboldened the weak to eat to the defilement of their consciences. Now when the Apostle said, he never would eat flesh as long as the world standeth, if it would make his brother to offend, he meant that, while he lived, he never would eat flesh under such circumstances as might give an occasion for leading his brother into sin, as some of the Corinthian brethren had done. It is absurd to suppose he had determined within himself never to eat flesh again under any circumstances, because eating meat offered to an idol under some circumstances had caused a weak brother to sin. It was the eating of meat offered to an idol, then, under some, but not under all circumstances that he condemned. For, he states, in the tenth chapter of the same epistle, cases in which meat offered to an idol, may be lawfully eaten. Now he that uses these texts as an authority for the doctrine of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit under all circumstances whatever, will not find himself supported by them. All that can be proved by these texts, is, that there may be circumstances under which it may be contrary to Christian charity, to use either ardent spirit or meat, or to partake of almost any worldly gratification. What those circumstances are, must be

determined by Christian prudence and discretion as guided by an enlightened understanding in the word of God. But it should be kept in mind, however, that according to the spirit of the texts that have been cited, there could be no offending or stumbling of any persons by the use of ardent spirit or any thing else, unless such persons sincerely believed that its use was sinful or at least doubtful. If, therefore, a Christian is known to have religious scruples not only in relation to the lawfulness of the use of ardent spirit, but to that also of meat or wine, or any other thing, however unreasonable such scruples may be, he should be treated with the greatest tenderness, and every possible caution should be used, that his feelings may not be wantonly wounded, and that a cause of stumbling may not be put in his way, by an improper use of our liberty.

From this examination of Rom. 14. 21, and Cor. 8. 13, it is very evident, that that interpretation of them which makes the temperate use of ardent spirit as a drink, a bad example, because many have used it to drunkenness, is utterly at variance with the meaning of the sacred writer. Upon the principle of this interpretation, the temperate use of *meat* would also be a bad example, for many have used meat to gluttony. Consequently, entire abstinence from the use of meat, would be a duty—a doctrine which is too absurd to be charged upon the Apostle as its author.

If, then, the use of ardent spirit is lawful in itself, its prudent and temperate use cannot be a bad example; for no example can be bad, which when followed produces no injury to others. If one sets the example of such a use of it, (that is a prudent and temperate use,) and another is induced to follow it, that other so long as he keeps to the example that is set, will, it is evident, sustain no injury from it; but if from a temperate, he goes to an intemperate use to his injury, he has then departed from the example given, and, consequently, he that gave it, can in no wise be answerable for the injury sustained. For the injury did not arise from following the example that was set, but from a departure from it. The example then, is not the thing that has produced the injury, but the departure from it. But it is said, that men will depart from the example given of temperate drink-

ing and go into excess, and therefore entire abstinence should be observed. But when were good examples always followed? Moderate eating is a good example, but do all follow it? Do not many eat to gluttony? But if, however, men under the example of temperance, will not drink prudently and soberly, will they under that of abstinence abstain altogether? Is the example of abstinence more reasonable than that of temperance, that it should be more likely followed? Suppose a man from motives of mistaken benevolence, should abstain from the use of every thing that is not necessary, and that is liable to great abuses, who would follow his example? Such a man would be considered no better than a madman, and his example would be of no other value than to shew more clearly the absurdity of the principle upon which he acted. And yet he would be only carrying out more fully and consistently a principle that is maintained to support the doctrine of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit.

Upon the whole, then, as the temperate use of ardent spirit is not an example injurious to others, what real benefit could any one derive from my joining the Society, and giving a pledge that I will entirely abstain from *that*, which if used temperately, injures the sobriety of none? None, certainly, from the mere example of my abstinence. But if, however, the temperate use of ardent spirit is admitted to be an injurious example, yet there could be no necessity for my joining the Society merely for the sake of setting the example of abstinence; for such an example may be exhibited without its aid, and would be as good and effectual, when given by one out of the Society as by one who is in it. But it is urged that as it is highly expedient for many to abstain from the use of ardent spirit, and as my joining the Society might induce others to follow my example, and thus bring themselves under a pledge of abstinence, that might be a security for their sobriety, that I ought to join the Society. My joining it, however, might not induce a single individual to follow my example; and if it could, I am unwilling to furnish any inducement to the joining of a Society whose plan of reformation appears to my mind of at least doubtful utility.

Great and important enterprises should be founded on principles that are calculated to insure success. Mere experiments may be made in things in which a failure would not be attended with serious consequences. But schemes of reformation in relation to morals, are such serious and important matters, that if they fail, much mischief must result. The want of success gives triumph to enemies, and weakens the exertions of friends. He that wishes to promote morality, should not, therefore, hastily adopt any new plan for its promotion, how plausible soever it may appear, but should examine it well, view it in all its bearings and tendencies, and give or withhold his support to it according to his views of its probable or improbable success. As the success, however, of the Society's plan depends on its expediency, the want of confidence in it in that respect, is a strong objection to my joining this institution.

3. I have not confidence in the expediency of the Society's plan of reformation. When I speak of the Society's plan, I mean the agreement or pledge recommended by the American Temperance Society, and published in their fifth report, and which I suppose has been generally adopted by other Temperance Societies. The method of promoting particular objects by association, has become so fashionable and popular, that he who should call in question the expediency of the Society's plan, would be in danger of exciting suspicions either of the soundness of his judgment, or of his hostility to the cause of temperance itself. But it should be kept in mind, that temperance and a Temperance Society are very different things. The former is the object, the latter the means of promoting that object. There may, therefore, be an objection to the means, without any hostility to the end. The mere name of Temperance Society, has operated as a charm, and produced in some minds an association so strong between the Temperance Society and temperance itself, that an objection to the one, is considered almost necessarily connected with an opposition to the other. But let the Society be called by its more appropriate name, an abstinence society, and this charm would be soon broken, and its merits might be more fairly and candidly investigated.

In judging the expediency of this institution, we should take into view the means by which it proposes to effect its object. To put down drunkenness is doubtless an object of great importance, and when the difficulties are considered that are to be overcome in effecting it, it will be seen that it is as arduous as it is important. The native depravity of the human heart, its proneness to criminal indulgences, and the inveteracy of vicious habits, show clearly the great obstacles that stand in the way of the temperance reformation. Great and arduous, however, as is this work, the Temperance Society has entered upon it, and proposes to effect it. And by what means? By an association founded on the following argument, viz: "We whose names are hereunto annexed, believing that the use of ardent spirit as a drink, is not only needless, but hurtful to the social, civil and religious interests of men; that it tends to form intemperate appetites and habits; and that while it is continued the evils of intemperance can never be done away;—do therefore agree, that we will not use it, or traffic in it, that we will not provide it as an article of entertainment, or for persons in our employment; and that in all suitable ways, we will discountenance the use of it in the community." This is the plan published by the American Temperance Society, and by which the vice of intemperance is proposed to be abolished. Of the various objections that may be made to the expediency of this plan, those which have occurred to my mind as deserving the most attention are the following:

1. *The plan of the Society is not needed.* Now, one object which the gospel has in view, falls in with that which the Temperance Society has in view, to wit: to make all men temperate. And doubtless the gospel exhibits a plan, the nature and provisions of which are adequate to accomplish this object. Can there then, be any necessity to introduce another, unless this other should be more efficient in removing the evils of intemperance? But is the plan of the Society such a plan? Are the principles upon which it is founded better calculated to abolish intemperance, than those of the gospel? Certainly not. For as the scheme of the gospel is dictated by infinite wisdom and goodness, it must consequently be more efficient in reforming

men, than any device of human wisdom. As the plan which the Society then has furnished is not a better or a more efficient plan to promote temperance than the Bible, there can be no need of its introduction. And if there is no need of it, it is certainly not expedient to adopt it. For it tends to weaken our confidence in the gospel as a scheme of reformation; and this effect has already been produced; for many relying more on the efficacy of a human, than a divine institution, are giving an undue proportion of their exertions in promoting the Temperance Societies, to the great disparagement and neglect of the Scriptures.

But it is said, that the gospel has been *tried*, and, hitherto has proved ineffectual to suppress intemperance. But can it be believed, that the Society will be able to accomplish that, which the gospel has failed to effect? What is it, that prevents a man from being temperate in all things? Is it not the evil propensities of his nature? But for these propensities he would doubtless avoid excess of every kind. Does the plan of the Society furnish a greater moral power to subdue or restrain the corruption of human nature? does it present more powerful motives to check sinful and irregular appetites, or offer more effectual aid to govern them, than the gospel, that it should be more efficacious in banishing the evils of intemperance from the world? This cannot be pretended. What has hitherto been the success of mere human devices in reforming men?—Various means have been tried to suppress vice and crime, and thus to lessen the ills of human life. Civil governments, laws, various other institutions, and systems of morality, have all been employed to effect this object. In all ages, the utmost exertions of the wit and ingenuity of statesmen, politicians and moralists have been used, with a view to improve the moral condition of man. But what success had these exertions in checking the current of immorality, and in producing effectual and permanent reformation? Was crime generally abolished in the world? Nothing like it. Vice and consequent misery still abounded. Not even a solitary instance of thorough reformation was produced, or could be produced. And wherefore? Mere human means were employed,—means that could not reach and purify the heart

and, consequently, defective. For out of the heart "proceed evil thoughts," and all abominations, "that defile the man," that make him at once the author and victim of sorrows, sufferings and crime. If ever the vice of intemperance be entirely banished from this country, it will be effected not by any human, but by a divine plan;—by one that can reach the seat of corruption, one that can cleanse the heart, the source of immorality: in short, it must be effected by the gospel. All reformation, not brought about under the influence of the truths of the gospel, must be partial and transitory. The branches of a tree may be cut off; but if the trunk remains, other branches and more numerous will put forth.

But why has the gospel not been more successful? Why has it not produced universal reformation? It is not because its provisions are inadequate to effect it; but because they are not embraced. But where these provisions have been embraced, they have effectually reclaimed men from intemperance of every description. The gospel is the means of reformation, and like all other means, to be effectual, it must be applied. But the gospel has already done much; for, all the reformation that has been effected in the world is to be ascribed to its influence. Because it has not done much more, shall we lose our confidence in it, decry its efficacy, and turn to some other plan? But has the gospel been fully tried? Has it been preached to every creature? have the utmost exertions been made to carry its divine truths to the breast of every man? This cannot be pretended. Had that zeal which has been manifested in promoting Temperance Societies been employed in preaching *Christ crucified*, how different would have been the results in favor of the temperance reformation!

But it is said, that the plan of the Society was not intended to supersede the gospel, but to aid it in the work of the temperance reformation. But how does it propose to give its aid? By offering the principle of entire abstinence. But the gospel does not need such aid. Had this principle been necessary to the temperance reformation, it would, doubtless, have found a place in the gospel. For the Bible being dictated by infinite wisdom, contains every thing necessary for faith and practice.

But as abstinence is not enjoined in the Bible as a principle necessary to reformation, the gospel scheme is perfect without it; and therefore does not need the aid of the Society's plan.

But it is asked are not Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Sunday School Unions and other institutions of the kind, valuable? Do they not propose to aid the gospel in the work of reformation? But how? Not by proposing any new plan, or new principles of reformation; but by adopting measures for the extension of the knowledge of the Scriptures—the diffusion of *their* principles. They do not propose to aid the gospel as a *plan*; for this they consider perfect; but to aid it in the spread of its *doctrines* and *precepts*. But the Temperance Society, distrustful of the efficacy of the gospel, proposes a new plan of reformation, founded on a principle unknown to the Scriptures, the principle of entire abstinence. It considers the plan of the gospel imperfect, so far at least as it respects the suppression of drunkenness; and proposes to aid it as a *plan*—to supply its supposed defects. To aid a plan by offering another plan, and to aid a plan by energetically sustaining the very plan itself, are different things. The first kind of aid the gospel rejects; the latter it accepts and claims as *duty*. As the Society, then, does not furnish a better or a more efficient scheme of reformation, than the gospel, the plan of the Society is not necessary; and, therefore, is inexpedient.

2. As the plan of the Society recognises abstinence from the use of ardent spirit, as a principle necessary to sobriety: and as this principle is in conflict both with the Scriptures and with reason, it is inexpedient.

1. It is in conflict with the Scriptures. The Bible recognises no such principle as this. It forbids the abuse only, and not the use of any of God's creatures. "For every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused." The Bible, then, adopts one principle of reformation, and the Society adopts another: the former, the due regulation of the appetite; the latter, the suppression of it. The Bible goes on the principle, that ardent spirit can be used without abuse; and therefore allows its use; the Society goes on the principle, that its use is necessarily connected with abuse; and therefore that its use

ought to be forbidden. In short the Bible enjoins temperance, but the Society abstinence. Now, it is evident, that the Bible, and the plan of the Society, are in conflict; for they go on different principles. But it may be said as abstinence is not forbidden by the Scriptures, it may without conflicting with the Bible, be adopted as a principle necessary to reformation. But what is not forbidden to be done, may not be assumed as necessary to be done. The Scriptures neither forbidding nor enjoining abstinence from meats or drinks, leave every one at liberty, provided he observes the terms of the grant, to use or not to use them, according to his own views of expediency or necessity. But the Society by assuming that the principle of entire abstinence is essential to sobriety, has made the observance of abstinence necessary, which, by the Bible, is left optional or discretionary. What is optional or discretionary, cannot be considered necessary. It would be absurd to say, that a man has liberty to use any creature of God, and at the same time say that he ought not to use that creature of God. This principle of entire abstinence as necessary to temperance is expressly avowed by the Society; for one of the reasons assigned by it for entering into the *agreement* to discontinue the use of ardent spirit is, "that while it is continued" (that is, its use) "*the evils of intemperance can never be done away.*"

Here then abstinence is clearly avowed as a principle necessary to temperance. For if in the opinion of the Society, the evils of intemperance can never be done away *while its use is continued*, the Society must consider abstinence from the use of ardent spirit, necessary to sobriety.

But it is said, that the Temperance Society is nothing more than a voluntary association of persons, founded on an agreement among themselves to abstain from the use of ardent spirit. Can there be, it is asked, any thing in this, that is in conflict with the Bible? Has not every person a right to adopt this principle for himself? To this no objection is made. But the objection is to the Society's laying down entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit as an essential and universal principle of sobriety—a principle necessary for the sobriety of every person, not only for those who may choose to adopt it for them-

selves, but for all others. It is this that is in conflict with the Bible. For if this principle were true, the Scriptures could not have tolerated the use of strong drink, and thus have perpetuated the evils of intemperance.

2. This principle is also in conflict with reason. Man requires restraints; but these should be reasonable, such as are suited to his nature and condition. As a moral agent, he is endowed with both reason and appetite—appetite to be gratified, and reason to govern his appetite. If a man so govern his appetite, that he innocently gratify it, why deny its gratification? If he be sober, why ask of him more? Why require him to be abstinent? Does abstinence make him a better man? Does it enable him to perform the duties of life with more fidelity? Can there be any merit in abstinence itself? At the best, it can be considered only as a means of sobriety: shall a merit be made of a means by which an end is accomplished? If there be any merit, it consists in the sobriety, by what means soever it may be attained. And if it can be attained while the appetite is gratified, why deny its gratification? But it is said, a man may *hurt himself, may plunge himself into ruin, may die a drunkard*, if he use ardent spirit. But through fear of his ruin shall we impose on him restraints in advance? Then, suppress all his appetites; for all of them may be dangerous, may lead to ruin.—Deprive him of every sense; reduce him at once to a mere stock or stone; he then will be safe—he will be in no danger. All unreasonable restrictions on the appetite are dangerous. If it be difficult to bring men under salutary and necessary restraints, it is still more so, to bring them to submit to such as are unnecessary and unreasonable. Such restraints tend to reaction, to the throwing off of all that are reasonable. As a stream, in delivering itself from an unnatural impediment in its course, goes beyond its proper boundaries; so man unreasonably restrained will violate just restraints. If we wish to promote temperance, our plan must be reasonable, suited to the nature of man. It must regard him as possessing appetites and passions. It must ask for no more than is necessary—for sobriety; not abstinence; the due regulation of the appetite in its gratification, and not its suppression. All

requisitions beyond these, are dangerous experiments, and tend rather to injure, than to promote the cause of temperance.

3. *The plan of the Society on its own principle, is too limited.* If it is important, that intemperance from the use of ardent spirit should be put down, it is equally so that intemperance from the use of all other intoxicating liquors should be suppressed. Is drunkenness more odious or more sinful from the use of one intoxicating liquor, than it is from another? It is in vain to stop one avenue to intemperance while all others are left open. As the professed object of the Society, is to suppress drunkenness, what good reason can be given why wine, for example, should not also be forbidden? There is nothing in its nature that prevents its use from being carried to excess. We see that the effects of drunkenness from it are dreadful. The loss of health and of reason, crime, beggary and want, misery in this life, and exposure to eternal ruin are evils that have been produced by excess in wine as well as excess in ardent spirit. If, then, entire abstinence is a measure necessary to prevent the evils of intemperance from the use of ardent spirit, it is also necessary to prevent the evils of intemperance from the use of wine. But it is said, that there is more drunkenness from the use of ardent spirit, and, consequently, a greater amount of evil from it, than from wine and other intoxicating drinks.

But let this be admitted as a fact, what then? Are not the evils which flow from intemperance in the use of wine and other fermented liquors, acknowledged to be very great? Shall not, then, that plan which proposes to apply a remedy to only one source of the evils of intemperance, be considered defective? Is it not as easy to apply the remedy in the one case, as in the other? Is it not as easy to give the pledge of abstinence from the use of wine as from that of ardent spirit?

If, however, the Society should succeed, in banishing the use of ardent spirit from the country, what would be gained? New sources of intoxication would be opened, or old ones would be enlarged. The Turks by the Koran, are forbidden the use of wine; but they resort to opium as the means of intoxication. There is, it is said by a late American resident in Paris, as much intemperance to be seen in that city where wine is the

common drink, as in the city of New York in the United States, where ardent spirit is most commonly used. The banishment of this article would be the cause of a freer use of other intoxicating drinks: the Society therefore would have to commence a new set of operations. But, in the meantime, there is much drunkenness from wine and other fermented liquors. Is this nothing, or little to be regarded by a Society whose professed object is to promote temperance? Is it not perceived, that exertions against drunkenness from one quarter only, favors the impression, that from another it is less odious; and thus that the evils of intemperance may be increased, rather than diminished? If, however, entire abstinence is a proper and necessary measure of sobriety, the Society has not gone far enough: and if it be not a necessary measure, it has gone too far. So, that, in either case, the plan of the Society is inexpedient. For in the one, it is too limited; and, in the other, it goes beyond the bounds of reason and Scripture.

Some of the most zealous and intelligent members of this institution, feeling the force of the objection, that its plan is too limited, are now using their best endeavors to apply the principle of entire abstinence to every thing that intoxicates; and many societies have already been founded on this principle. Doubtless, the Society, for the sake of consistency, will either abandon, or amend its plan. For, certainly, it will be found difficult to sustain the consistency of the doctrine, that abstinence from one intoxicating liquor, is necessary to sobriety, but that it is not so from any other. This doctrine is so contrary to the common sense of the community, that, even in an age so prone to receive every new opinion, it must be sooner or later rejected. If, then, the Society continue to exist at all, it must be on the ground of entire abstinence from every thing that intoxicates.

4. *The plan of the Society is not expedient, both because the agreement of abstinence that it requires, is of questionable propriety, and because the performance of it is too uncertain for reliance in a scheme of reformation.*

1. *The agreement is of questionable propriety.* Although it is our duty to be temperate; yet it is not so to give a pledge of

abstinence. To lay ourselves under an obligation of abstinence which we are not bound to do, is inexpedient; because it exposes us unnecessarily to temptation. It lays a snare for the conscience by which it may be entangled. For no one is so fortified against temptation, that he may not be led, not only to a violation of his promise of abstinence, but also to a violation of the rule of temperance, and thus to add drunkenness to a breach of faith. Why, then, should we throw ourselves in the way of temptation? Why create new and unnecessary obligations, the violation of which may involve us in guilt? But it may be said, as abstinence is a measure necessary for the sobriety of some, it cannot be inexpedient for such to enter into an agreement to use the means that are necessary to the end. To this it may be replied, that, when abstinence is found necessary, it may be observed without giving a pledge to that effect. Again, it may be said, that a pledge will strengthen the obligation to do that which ought to be done. But, if a man is truly desirous of being temperate, and believes abstinence as a means necessary to that end, he will find a reliance on the grace of God a much safer and better security for his abstinence, than any promise that he might give to any set of men.

But a pledge of abstinence is a pledge of sobriety. For he that never drinks ardent spirit, cannot be drunken by it. If, however, a promise to abstain from the commission of drunkenness, can be made with propriety, it can be made from the commission of every other immoral act. But who that has a knowledge of himself, and is desirous of preserving a good conscience, would enter into such an agreement?

2. *The performance of the agreement is too uncertain for reliance in a scheme of reformation.* The inquiry is not whether the agreement of abstinence will be observed at all; but whether it will be kept to that extent, that it shall prove to be an efficient and valuable means of general reformation. The question is of little importance, how many have joined the Society: how many, after they have entered into the agreement of abstinence, will keep it with good faith, is the question upon which the utility of this institution, if useful at all, must depend. That the certainty of the performance of agreements or promises, de-

depends on a sound moral principle, is a proposition which cannot be denied. The prospect, therefore, of the observance of any agreement will be increased or diminished according to the strength or weakness of this principle. Where it is entirely wanting, no confidence at all can be placed on any one's promise. Will the promise of honesty bind a thief, or of truth a liar? Is the moral condition of the world such, that without any further security than the integrity of men, a reliance, in general, can be placed with safety on the performance of the various contracts, agreements and promises which occur in the common transactions of life? Experience and observation decide this question in the negative. Whence civil governments, laws, and courts of justice? From the known fact that man wants integrity, is unfaithful, and that much higher sanctions are necessary for the security of the performance of them than his mere integrity. Now, where is the security for the performance of the agreement of abstinence from the use of ardent spirit? If there be any, from whence is it derived? Not from the nature of the agreement itself; for, although it differs from all others, this cannot make the performance of it more certain. Is it derived from the absence of temptation to the breach of it? Is there no propensity in man to stimulating drinks? The strongest imaginable: and it has been manifested in all ages. And although greatly increased by indulgence, it is natural, and is not, as some have imagined, altogether acquired. For, we do not use those things between which and our natural appetites there is no suitability. There are, then, temptations to be overcome in subduing this propensity, as well as in subduing other propensities. And there is no security for the performance of this agreement from any power with which the Society is invested to enforce it. The only reliance, then, for its observance, is placed on the mere integrity of men,—a footing upon which no prudent man will place those contracts and agreements that are made for his benefit, and that occur in the ordinary transactions of life. And is this a sufficiently solid foundation upon which a great scheme of reformation should rest? It is true, that there may be a reliance on the few comparatively, who are governed by sound moral and religious principles for the performance of all their agreements. But what advantage can accrue to the cause of

temperance by persons of this description becoming members of the Society? Would they not be as likely to be sober out of the Society as in it? For if a man has such sound morality as will keep him strictly up to the performance of all his promises and agreements, and especially such, the violation of which may be made in secret, unknown to any, surely his sobriety may be depended on without his joining the Society. But with regard to the great majority of the community, that most need reformation, there can be no such reliance on their faithfulness and integrity, as to justify the expediency of placing the cause of temperance on a bare agreement of abstinence. The introduction of the Society's plan, presupposes a moral condition of the community, which never did exist, and if it did, would render its adoption of little value. For, if men were so much under the influence of such moral principles, that all their agreements, contracts and promises, would be faithfully performed, there would be little danger of resting the cause of temperance on these principles alone. Taking the moral condition of the world as it now is, they would afford a better security against intemperance, than could be obtained by an agreement of abstinence. Is it not remarkable, that the Society has proposed a plan for the prevention of intemperance, by an agreement of abstinence, the observance of which requires a state of morals, that would supersede the necessity of the plan itself?

To place the cause of temperance, then, on an agreement of abstinence, is to place it on a footing too precarious,—a footing that universal experience has pronounced unsafe in relation to all other kinds of agreements. An agreement of abstinence to reform the world! To make men temperate! To extirpate drunkenness,—a vice of all others the most deeply seated! If the holy Church of God, holding up in every age the light of truth; if the preaching of the gospel, the last hope of a ruined world; the denunciations of the wrath of the Almighty on the wicked, and the promises of eternal rewards to the righteous; if the example of the pious, exhibiting the beauty of virtue and moderation, and their happy effects on the community; have not as yet delivered the world from intemperance, what can be expected from a bare agreement of abstinence?

5. *The Society's plan promotes a spirit of intolerance.* It has

been said, that there is almost uniformly in voluntary associations, a spirit of intolerance. This remark may, perhaps, be received as a general truth. There is, doubtless, a proneness in those who are associated for the purpose of promoting the most benevolent objects, to pass over the bounds of moderation, —to act with rash zeal in accomplishing these objects. On this account, societies in general have been objected to by some of the most enlightened men in the community, as inexpedient, —as calculated to do more harm than good. But, while, in other societies, the tendency to intolerance is only incidental, arising from the imperfection of man; in the Temperance Society it springs directly out of its plan: it is a part of the plan itself. For, every person who becomes a member of it, is required to pledge himself *to discountenance in all suitable ways the use of ardent spirit in the community*. Now to discountenance its use is to discountenance him that uses it. The use is inseparably connected with the user. It would be absurd, therefore, to say, that we may discountenance the use without discountenancing the user. He, then, that embarks in the cause of the Society, embarks under a solemn agreement not to frown down those who are guilty of crime or vice, but to frown down those who, in the exercise of the right of private judgment, use a particular drink, the temperate use of which injures no one, disturbs not the peace of families or neighborhoods, nor produces any convulsion in the state. What right has a set of men to unite for the purpose of thus interfering with the right of private judgment? Is not this intolerance of the worst kind? And is it not stamped on the face itself of the Society's plan? Is a man to be discountenanced for a mere difference of opinion on a matter of indifference? To be held up to public censure, because he thinks he can, and another thinks he cannot innocently refresh himself with a temperate draught of water mixed with ardent spirit? Is this right? But *all suitable ways are to be employed* to discountenance the use of ardent spirit. Ways are deemed suitable when they answer the end proposed. The object is to discountenance the users of ardent spirit, and what means soever will accomplish this object, may therefore be considered suitable. And what are those ways which have been

deemed such, and which have been employed? To denounce good and pious men, who use ardent spirit as a drink, as guilty of a moral wrong; to censure those who withhold their names from the Society as guilty of a criminal neglect of duty and as encouragers of drunkenness, have been considered *suitable ways to discountenance* the use of ardent spirit in the community. This fact furnishes a proof, that according to the received meaning of the term, *suitable*, as used in this clause of the agreement, the most unjustifiable *ways* may be resorted to to put down the use of ardent spirit. And what other *ways* will be employed to accomplish this object? Will the joining of the Society be made a sort of political test in elections for ascertaining the merits of candidates for civil office?—or a test in our common and domestic concerns by which it is to be determined what merchants, mechanics, or laborers should be favored with our patronage? These means may be considered as suitable as those that have been employed. They frown on the use of ardent spirit. Why then should they not be used? But to what lengths this spirit of intolerance may be carried, who can determine? Who can say, thus far it shall go, and no further?

But will public opinion on which so much reliance seems to be placed as a means of reformation, if brought to bear against the use of ardent spirit, be an effectual check to it? It might, possibly, for a time, lessen, in some degree, the open and public use of it. But will it check its secret use? Public opinion cannot reach a man in his closet, and frown on him there. In secret he may drink with impunity as far as public opinion is concerned. Public opinion put down the use of ardent spirit or even vice itself! When was vice ever abolished in this way? Look at the lying, swindling, gambling, and other vices which still prevail. Public opinion is against these; but it has not yet been able to put them down. If it has been ineffectual to abolish practices which are universally acknowledged to be vicious, will it be able to put down such as are considered innocent?

But is public opinion a just standard of morals, that it should be made the means of reformation? What has been considered right at one time, has not been so considered at another. Public opinion at one period, in Europe, gave to the Crusades, or ex-

peditions against the Infidels, the warrant and sanction of religion. The use of tobacco at one time was condemned in some countries of Europe, by public opinion. In Russia, "smoking was forbidden under pain of having the nose cut off; and in some parts of Switzerland, it was likewise made a subject of public prosecution—the police regulations of the Canton of Berne, placing the prohibition of smoking in the list of the ten commandments immediately under that against adultery." The cruel persecutions in New England of those unhappy creatures, called witches, were in conformity with public opinion. Paganism, Mahomedanism, and all the errors and fooleries of the Romish Church, have been for ages, supported by public opinion. Is public opinion, then, varying and shifting, approving at one time that which it condemns at another, to be made the standard of duty, and to be brought down, with the power of the Inquisition, against those who dare to reject its dictates? Of all kinds of intolerance that in religious matters is the worst. Under the pretence of advancing the cause of virtue and religion, it violates all the charities of social life, and tramples down the most sacred rights. And our laws, although they place all on an equal footing with regard to religious as well as civil rights, can afford no protection against this evil. An enlightened statesman speaking of religious intolerance says, "our laws have applied the only antidote to this vice, protecting our religious as they do our civil rights, by placing all on an equal footing. But more remains to be done, for although we are free by law, we are not so in practice. Public opinion erects itself into an inquisition, and exercises its office with as much fanaticism as fans the flame of an *auto de fe*."

If public opinion is to be employed to put down the use of ardent spirit, it should certainly be fairly obtained and fairly expressed. It was not the object of the Temperance Society by association, to concentrate public opinion, already formed against the use of ardent spirit, and thus to bring it to bear more effectually upon its abolition, but to form and control it. What was public sentiment in relation to this subject previous to the getting up of Temperance Societies? Was it, that entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit was necessary to sobriety,

and that therefore its use ought to be abolished? This was not the case. For when this doctrine was first advanced, it was treated with ridicule, and the scheme to carry it into practice by Societies was generally considered visionary. A great number of the most pious and intelligent men were opposed to the scheme; and it was long after its introduction, that many who are now its advocates were brought to give up their opposition to it. But a change in public opinion was to be effected. And by what means? By fair argument only? This would have been lawful. This was not the mode; but by promoting a spirit of intolerance against the users of ardent spirit. To produce by intolerance an expression of opinion against its use, and to employ the opinion thus expressed to put it down! Is this fair? Is it lawful? Doubtless, numbers under the influence of intolerant measures, of censure, of being accounted enemies to sobriety, of being excessive lovers and users of strong drink, have been induced to join the Temperance Society, or yield a silent acquiescence in it.

But public opinion, when obtained by unfair measures, cannot be truly considered as public opinion at all. If, therefore, it were a just criterion of truth, it could not, when unfairly obtained, be legitimately employed as an instrument of reformation. To abolish drunkenness by intolerance! To employ one vice to put down another! Who ever was made a virtuous or sober man by persecution? Reformation is the result of a voluntary conviction of duty. A man through fear of censure may give the pledge of abstinence; but what does this avail, if this conviction is wanting? Such a man may be made a hypocrite, but not a sober man.

To have joined the Temperance Society, then, by way of example to others, when I believed its plan of reformation to be inexpedient, and the measures also that have been adopted for its promotion to be dangerous and mischievous, would have been in me neither just nor candid.

4. *The measures which have been adopted for the promotion of Temperance Societies, I consider mischievous and dangerous.*

Upon the introduction of these Societies the greatest zeal was manifested to carry them forward into full operation; and to

effect this, measures were soon adopted of an extraordinary and pernicious character. Of these measures the declaration, that the use of ardent spirit, as a drink, is an immorality, may be considered as the most prominent. It was soon discovered by some of their advocates that these Societies could not with sufficient success be promoted on the ground of expediency; that it would be difficult on this ground to persuade men to bring themselves under unusual restrictions in relation to the use of that which they had been long accustomed to consider their liberty to enjoy. For, although, it might be considered expedient or necessary for one, it might not be considered so for another to abstain entirely from the use of ardent spirit. And for whom it might be thus expedient or necessary, it was seen must be left to the judgment of every one. For there is no earthly tribunal that could be made a judge in this case without downright oppression. It seemed, therefore, necessary to take different ground, to connect the cause of the Temperance Society with that of religion and the Church. To enlist the conscience in its behalf, and to declare that the use of ardent spirit is sinful, were found to be steps absolutely necessary, to sustain the cause. This doctrine, no doubt, has paved the way for the more extensive reception of the Society, and is one of the boldest attempts that has been made in this country to obtain dominion over the conscience for the purpose of sustaining a favorite scheme, and finds an equal only in the Romish Church which requires abstinence from meats.

That the use of ardent spirit as a drink, and of many other liquors might be discontinued without any serious detriment to the community will not be contested. But who, notwithstanding, shall forbid the use of them? If they be allowed by the Scriptures on condition of the temperate use of them, who can say with safety, that they shall not be used at all? We may recommend abstinence as a measure of expediency where, from particular circumstances, it may appear proper, and employ all our influence to promote it. Thus far we may go and no further. The moment we interdict the use of ardent spirit under what pretence soever, we exceed our just limits, and involve ourselves in difficulties from which it would not be easy to be

extricated. An Apostle could recommend abstinence from marriage under particular circumstances, though he treated the forbidding of it as a general thing as a doctrine of devils.

Doubtless, the principle, that the abuse of a thing is a good reason for its disuse, has finally led to the interdiction of the use of ardent spirit as sinful. Error begets error. So closely is one heresy allied to another, that the introduction of one false principle naturally opens the way for the introduction of another. History is not without striking examples of this truth. From the beginning of the fourth to the middle of the ninth century, illicit intercourse between the sexes was becoming so depraving to the morals of that rude age, that good men directed all their exertions to eradicate so pernicious a vice. Celibacy was soon regarded as a virtue, and became the subject of panegyric by the early Christian writers. It was soon considered as a duty; and, before the beginning of the fifth century, it was enforced as a rule of discipline on the clergy in a few churches. But, before the middle of the ninth century, the imposition of celibacy on the clergy was general. This historical fact is a striking example not only of the tendency of one error to produce another, but of the vanity and hazard of stretching the rule of duty beyond the requirements of the divine law. For the licentiousness that followed such unnatural austerity, shows, that the proper boundaries for the indulgence of men's natural propensities, are marked out only in the Bible.

But how does it appear, that the use of ardent spirit is sinful? Nothing can be immoral that is not a transgression of the divine law. "For sin is a transgression of the law." If its use, then, is sinful, it is because it is a violation of the law of God.

Do the Scriptures forbid the use of ardent spirit? If so, it is immoral to use it. But as every creature of God is granted to man for his use, as has been shown in another place, the use of ardent spirit is not forbidden by the Scriptures; and consequently the use of it is not immoral. How, then, can this monstrous doctrine, the immorality of the use of ardent spirit, be maintained? And what are the arguments that are employed to support it? The following are the principal, only a brief notice of which can be taken.

1. *Ardent spirit is not needful.* This argument applies with equal force against the use of every thing that is not necessary. Is the use of tobacco, coffee, or tea needful? A great part of the world, is in the common use of these articles; but the world can go on without them. Is a man to be declared immoral because he uses these articles? With as much reason, I apprehend, as that he should be declared immoral who uses ardent spirit. If the use of those things that are not necessary is to be condemned as criminal, where shall we find a moral man? All use some things, either in dress, equipage or fare that are not necessary. There is scarcely any one who does not use something that might be dispensed with. If then, the use of ardent spirit is criminal, because it is not needful, the use of every thing else that is not needful is also criminal. And to preserve our morality we must give up all the refinements of civilized life, and go back to the simplicity of the natural state. This argument, then, by proving too much, is a bad argument, and proves nothing to the purpose.

2. *Ardent spirit is not useful.* Is the morality or immorality of the use of a thing, to be decided by its utility or inutility? Must every thing that we use be absolutely useful to us, or else the use be sinful? There are many things of such a character, that it is often difficult to say, whether any real benefit is to be derived from the use of them. If, however, they should happen to prove of no benefit to us, are we to be accounted immoral because we have used them? Men are so constituted, that what is useful to some, may not be so to others. One man derives benefit from the use of tobacco. Another finds the use of that article of no advantage to him. One receives refreshment from a dish of tea, under some, but not under other circumstances. Another receives no refreshment from it under any circumstances. So that, according to the rule of judging of the morality of the use of a thing by its utility, the use of tobacco or tea might be an innocent act in one man (and not in him at all times) but not in another. To him that derives a benefit from the thing used the use is moral; but to him that receives no benefit from it the use is immoral. Again, the utility of the use of things admits of degrees: some are more useful, others

less so; and some again are least of all. So that, if we judge of the morality of the use of things by their utility, we shall judge the use of some more moral, of others less moral, and of others again the least moral of all. Thus the morality of the use of things will vary in degree according to their utility. This is indeed a refinement on the subject of morals!

But is ardent spirit as a drink of no use at all? How is this question to be decided? Certainly, by the experience of him that uses it. And there are those who say, that the moderate use of it is beneficial to them. And are they not the best judges in their own cases? If a man's own experience is not to decide what meats and drinks are beneficial to him, whose experience is to decide the question? If however, to free us from guilt, all we eat or drink must be productive of some positive good, who then is guiltless?

3. *Ardent spirit is hurtful.* It is said as it contains alcohol, which is poisonous in its nature, and therefore destructive to the human constitution, that its use is immoral. But do not all fermented liquors contain that intoxicating principle, called alcohol? He that drinks wine, drinks alcohol. And it is well known that a considerable portion of it is found in the best wines, and some kinds contain nearly half of their bulk of brandy. But wine is not only allowed by the Scriptures, but is considered by them as a blessing: "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man." Psalms 104. 15. If ardent spirit is poisonous because it contains alcohol, so is wine. But is it possible, that it could have been considered a blessing by the inspired writer, and that too on account of its exhilarating effect, if it were so poisonous that it could not be used without destruction to health? By the law of Moses even the strong drink of the ancients, was permitted to be used by the Israelites. "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, for sheep, or for wine, or for *strong drink*, and for whatsoever thy soul desireth. And thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and shalt rejoice, thou and thy household." Deut. 14. 26. Would Moses have allowed the use of wine or strong drink, which is supposed by some to be analagous to ardent spirit, if it be so hurtful to the human constitution, that it could not be used with-

out its destruction? Or could our Saviour have countenanced the use of wine by working a miracle to produce it at a wedding, for the accommodation of the guests, if it be so poisonous in its nature that it cannot be used without destruction to health? What difference can there be as it relates to guilt, between the act of drinking wine and the act of drinking ardent spirit? They both contain alcohol. Does the decision of this question depend on the quantity of alcohol in each? But suppose the ardent spirit is so diluted by water, which is commonly done, as that in equal bulks there shall be no more alcohol in the diluted ardent spirit, than in the wine, how will the question of guilt then stand? Would not the use of the ardent spirit thus diluted, be as harmless as the wine? Why then, may wine be used, while ardent spirit should be rejected? He, then, that contends that ardent spirit cannot be used without immorality, because it contains alcohol, is reduced to this dilemma—either to relinquish this doctrine, or to maintain that the use of wine is also an immorality. But to maintain this would be expressly contrary to the letter of the Bible.

A question may be made in this debate, and worth considering, how much alcohol must there be in drinks in order that it may constitute the use of them moral. Now, as the use of wine has the express sanction of the Scriptures, it would be desirable that some kind of it should be fixed upon as a standard, to which all such drinks hereafter may be brought, and thus the question in relation to the morality or immorality of using them which now agitates the Christian community may be finally settled. But I leave this matter to those who are more skilful in such things than myself.

Every thing we eat or drink may be injurious to health. But this, however, depends on the manner in which it is used. And the nature of the thing itself will furnish the rule by which the manner of its use may be determined. The most poisonous things in nature, have been made subservient to the benefit of man, when this rule has been observed. Every one of common sense knows, that intoxicating liquors are not to be used as often, and in as great quantity as water. But how often and in what quantity they are to be used, must be regulated by

prudence and discretion. The question is not whether ardent spirit may be used to the destruction of health, whether those who use it in too large quantities, or too frequently, are laying the foundation of diseases. But this is the question, is ardent spirit so poisonous in its nature, that it cannot be used at all as a drink without injury to health? And how shall this question be decided? No other way so effectually and certainly, as by experience. And if any reliance can be placed on human testimony, it has been used as a drink in such a way, that no more injury has been received from it, than from the temperate use of wholesome food. It is found, then, by actual experience, that it is the manner of the use of ardent spirit, and not its *nature*, that makes it, like all other things for food or drink, hurtful or not to the human constitution.* The most wholesome food received in too great quantities, or under some particular circumstances, may be converted into a deadly poison. If, then, the use of ardent spirit, is hurtful as a drink, it is only when it is used intemperately. Can it be believed by an intelligent public, that a few drops of this liquor, received into the stomach, with a view of refreshment, is a sin, a *crying sin*? And yet this doctrine is taught in an age that is considered peculiarly enlightened.

4. *The use of ardent spirit creates an appetite dangerous to sobriety.* But what kind of use of it, is that which produces such an appetite? Surely, not a temperate use. It is only a temperate use that is contended to be not immoral. Temperance in drinking regards not only the quantity of that which is used, but the frequency with which it is received. Where there is such a use of ardent spirit, or wine, or any other intoxicating liquor, as creates an inordinate appetite, certainly the bounds of temperance are exceeded. To go against such a use as this, is to go against an intemperate use, about which there is no dispute. But to say, that ardent spirit cannot be used as a drink without producing such an appetite as to endanger sobriety, is to assert that which is contrary to fact.

5. *The use of ardent spirit causes a great and wicked waste of property.* It is readily admitted, that millions of dollars have been *wickedly wasted* in the intemperate use of this article. But

this great and *wicked waste of property* has not been confined to the intemperate use of ardent spirit; it extends to the improper use of all intoxicating drinks and to many other things. But is the temperate use of it a wicked waste of money? If its use is objected to as producing a wicked waste of money, because it is expended on an article that is not necessary and is productive, by abuse, of much mischief, then all the money that has been laid out in other things that are unnecessary and liable to abuse is also wickedly wasted. The money that has been annually paid for coffee, tea, wine, and a thousand other things, is wickedly thrown away. For all these articles being mere luxuries, and being also liable to abuse, may be dispensed with. On the article of tobacco alone hundreds of thousands of dollars are annually laid out. And if there is an article used by man, which is less needful, and more excessively used than all others, it is tobacco.

If, however, the use of an article is unlawful in itself, whether it costs little or much, or nothing at all, it must be given up. But if the use of it is lawful, the circumstance of the paying of money for it, cannot make it unlawful. For it is absurd to consider it lawful to use a thing, and unlawful to employ the means to procure it. If, however, the morality of the use of ardent spirit is made to depend on its cost, then it would follow when it costs us nothing, its use is not immoral. So that its use may be moral in one man, and not in another. To him who drinks it, without paying for it, its use may be moral; but to him who pays for it, its use is immoral.

To endeavor to prove the unlawfulness of the use of ardent spirit from its cost, is begging the question—is assuming that as proved which is denied. For it must be first shown to be unlawful in itself, before the money laid out for it can be said to be *wickedly wasted*. But as this cannot be done, all that is said about the cost of it, is of no value.

Thus I have briefly noticed those arguments, which have been commonly employed, to prove that the use of ardent spirit is an immorality. Can such arguments be good? Are they sufficient to set aside an express Scripture grant of every thing for the use of man? This grant then being once given, and

never repealed, continues in full force and virtue to this day; and as ardent spirit is included in this grant, its use is not an immorality. The attempt, therefore, to support the Temperance Society cause, by teaching the doctrine of the immorality of the use of ardent spirit, is of dangerous tendency. For if men by their own authority can make the drinking of ardent spirit a sinful act, they can make as many acts sinful as they please. And thus we may have a new list of sins as often as occasion requires; and the Bible, the only standard of morals, would be entirely set aside.

When once there is a departure from the Scriptures, it is impossible to foresee to what further lengths of extravagance men may go. There may be proclaimed as many new sins, as there are luxuries in the world. Coffee, tea, and tobacco will probably meet the same fate as ardent spirit; and a drinker of coffee, or tea, or a chewer of tobacco will be held up to public censure as an immoral man. Let none laugh at this suggestion. Who a few years ago could have believed that the use of ardent spirit would have been declared a *moral wrong*? And yet this has been done not only by a convention composed of representatives of the different Temperance Societies within the United States, but it has been also done, by ecclesiastical authority. And as this declaration is founded on the same principles that would condemn the use of these articles, it is likely that their use will also be declared sinful. And, indeed, I should not be surprised if, in this age of fanaticism, war should be waged against every refinement of civilized life, and an attempt made to bring man back to his natural state.

The doctrine of the immorality of the use of ardent spirit, leads to the rejection of wine as an unsuitable element in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. This is its natural tendency. For, the same kind of reasoning that has been employed to prove that the use of ardent spirit is an immorality, will be found equally good to prove the immorality of the use of wine. Thus a way is prepared for the rejection of it for sacramental purposes. This, in fact, has been done by some of the northern churches, and water has been introduced in the place of wine. And thus by discarding one of its elements, and receiving an-

other which is of an entirely different nature as a substitute, a sacred and divine ordinance is virtually abolished, and a new one is introduced in its place, to the contempt of the authority of the head of the church.

The doctrine of the immorality of the use of ardent spirit is as new as it is heretical. Our pious ancestors did not even dream that they were committing sin, when with thankfulness, they received temperately any of God's creatures. They lamented the evils of intemperance, but they did not propose to prevent those evils by teaching the unlawfulness of the use of ardent spirit. How has it happened, that they remained in ignorance of this sin? Had they less piety, or less knowledge of the holy Scriptures, than men of the present age? This cannot be pretended: for, examples may be produced from among our ancestors of the holiest and greatest divines, with which the church has been furnished since the days of the Apostles. They, as it would appear, died in ignorance of this matter; for, in all their writings, as far as I recollect, there is not a hint in relation to it. And what are we to think of the case of all those professors of Christianity, who have died in the temperate use of ardent spirit? Have they not all died in sin? Does not this doctrine put the seal of destruction on thousands of those who, having in their day been reputed pious, have long since gone to their graves?

But it is said, that we live in an age of light, greater than that of our ancestors. Is it pretended that we have a new revelation? This error would of all others be the most fatal. Or is the church now favored with some new and divine light, by which the Scriptures are better understood, and discoveries are made of essential truths, which lay concealed from our ancestors? Surely, the aid of some new and extraordinary light, is not necessary to find out what we are permitted by the Scriptures to eat and drink. This is a plain subject, which may be comprehended by every one that can read his Bible. From the opinion of some, it would seem, that the church has just emerged from something like Popish darkness, and that the present age stands in relation to the former, as that of the Reformation to the one immediately preceding. This pretension to some new

light, is very imposing: it gratifies the natural pride of man, by placing him on higher ground than that occupied by those who went before him. Doubtless, this claim for the church, has contributed not a little to facilitate the reception of many of the new and extraordinary notions of the day. For, if this claim be admitted, her opinions will be regarded with more than ordinary respect,—with something like superstitious reverence. If good men claim for the present age some divine light which was not enjoyed by the church in former ages—a light by which they have discovered in the Scriptures some important truth unknown before, they deceive themselves. By protestants at least the Bible is admitted to be a sufficient rule of faith and practice. But if a communication of some new and extraordinary light was necessary to understand the Bible, and that this light has been withheld from the church, it would follow that the pious for eighteen centuries, have been destitute of a sufficient rule. For, if something like a revelation is necessary to explain the Scriptures, the Scriptures can be no rule until thus explained. For, a rule not known is no rule at all. Can it be believed that an important truth, the knowledge of which was necessary for Christian practice and acceptable service, was unknown to the church until lately; that, suddenly, such extraordinary light has been poured on the church, that that which had been so long hidden in the sacred repository of the Bible, has, at length, been brought to light? and that now it is as clear as day, that the temperate use of ardent spirit, which was considered by our pious ancestors as lawful, was so considered from ignorance? and on this account, that they are to be considered excusable in the use of ardent spirit?

Or, by greater light on this subject is it intended, that there is now a greater discovery of the evils of intemperance, than there had been in times past, and that, therefore, it is sinful now to drink ardent spirit? If modern inquiry has afforded the public much information with regard to the number of victims of intemperance, can this additional information make it immoral to drink ardent spirit at all? It may be a reason why greater exertions should be made to render men temperate; but is it a good ground for the opinion, that they sin if they are not

abstinent? Suppose a catalogue of the victims of the illicit intercourse of the sexes were accurately exhibited to the public, together with its concomitant evils, the misery and want that attend its course, the domestic peace that it destroys, and the disease and wretchedness that it entails on the posterity of its victims; would such an exhibition create a new obligation, by which sexual intercourse should be forbidden, and entire abstinence should be enjoined upon all? Or suppose that a faithful and particular account could be given of all the evils that have flowed from intemperance in *wine*, from the beginning of its use to the present time, how disgusting, how frightful would be such an account! But would it produce an obligation to discontinue the use of wine? Information with regard to the number who fall victims to excess in any particular species of indulgence, can never affect the immutable doctrines of the Bible, or decide the question whether it is lawful or not to use any particular creature of God for food or drink. If, however, information of the evils of intemperance, was necessary to lead to the conclusion that it is immoral to drink ardent spirit, our ancestors were not without such information. They saw thousands falling victims to drunkenness: they saw drunkards corrupting the morals of the community, and rushing headlong to the destruction both of body and soul. They saw enough to satisfy them of the great evils of intemperance from the abuse of this liquor; and yet, in the face of all they saw and felt, they used it themselves. It is impossible, therefore, to free from great guilt and from endless ruin such of our ancestors as lived and died in the temperate use of ardent spirit. If the use of ardent spirit is immoral, how pious soever our ancestors may have been considered, this consequence must inevitably follow. For if they were ignorant, their ignorance was wilful and therefore inexcusable.

And what opinion should be formed of the character and situation of those that live in the present age, and have been heretofore considered pious, who still continue in the temperate use of ardent spirit as a drink? That they have as fair opportunities as others, of knowing and practising their duty, cannot be denied. They have the Scriptures in their hands; they

have all the light and all the improvements of the *nineteenth century* : they have sufficient ability to examine and learn what are the doctrines of the Bible, and to distinguish between what is true and what is false in morals. They, therefore, cannot plead ignorance, nor can any one apologize for them. Must they not then be condemned as immoral? Certainly, if it is true that the use of ardent spirit is sinful. If this doctrine then is true, thousands of those who have been long esteemed pious and holy men are now lying under great and wilful guilt, and must, unless repentance intervene, finally perish. A doctrine then, that hurls destruction not only on the pious of the past, but also on the pious of the present generation—that fixes a foul blot on the character and example of some of the holiest members of the church that have lived, and are now living, should, to say the least, be regarded with the greatest suspicion.

Truly, is it not remarkable, that what our forefathers considered a *virtue*, should be now esteemed a *vice*? They believed, according to their views of the Scriptures, that temperance in the use of ardent spirit was a virtue; but now it is said to be a vice. But we are told that great improvements have been made in the principles of religion and morality, of which they were ignorant—that they acted honestly according to the light they possessed. But if such improvements continue to progress, the next age will, it is likely, reject the morality of the present; and thus the rule of duty may vary according to the improvements of different ages. For what may be considered moral in one age may not be so considered in another. And thus there would be no certain and permanent standard of morals at all. But is the rule of our duty, which is immutable in its nature, to be made the subject of improvement? Shall we have improvements on the law of God? If it is sinful to drink ardent spirit now, it was so a hundred years ago. But if our pious ancestors were so far behind us in knowledge, that they were grossly ignorant of one of the plainest subjects of morality, that of what may or may not be used lawfully as a drink, their opinions and example, heretofore deemed a valuable legacy to their posterity, must be viewed with suspicion, and will finally be rejected as worthless. Indeed, we see that these

are every day less and less respected, and that such is the rage for change and innovation, that nothing that bears the face of antiquity can scarcely be tolerated : and that every new doctrine or notion is received with the greatest greediness, to the detriment of morality and religion.

Some of the advocates of the Temperance Society have maintained, not only that the use of ardent spirit is sinful, but that the joining of the Society is an important duty, and that the not joining of it is highly criminal. I ask by what part of the moral law is this made a duty ? To this it is replied, that although it is not made so by positive enactment, yet, according to the spirit of the law, as the Society is the means of promoting temperance, to give it all the support possible, becomes the duty of every one. But suppose there are (which in fact is the case) many wise and good men who do not believe in the expediency of the Society's plan for the suppression of drunkenness ; who, then, are to be judges in this case—they who believe in its expediency, or they who do not ? No reason can be given why the former should be judges in preference to the latter. But by what authority have they acted, who have undertaken to be judges in the case ? Let it be produced, if they have any, and all due submission will be given to it. But, if they have none, which is the fact, they are exhibited in the ludicrous attitude of judging for others, and endeavoring to control their consciences. This they do by setting up their own opinions as the standard of duty. This supposed duty of joining the Temperance Society, has no better foundation for its support than the opinion of fallible men. And if the opinions of men are made the rule of duty, since they are often various and contradictory, the rule of duty will also be various and contradictory. For, the same set of men who may claim to be judges for others of measures which should be adopted for the advancement of morality, may at one time approve of measures, which at another they may reject ; and thus a good conscience may be preserved either one way or the other, by supporting or not supporting a measure, according to the various changes the opinions of men may undergo. It is a fact well known, that some of the greatest opponents of this Society

are now its greatest defenders, and many of its earliest and most zealous supporters have withdrawn from it. It is true that every one has the liberty, and ought to change his opinions on better information. But, certainly, they who are liable to change, should be the last to set up their opinions as the rule of duty, and to condemn others for not submitting to it. The support of no project of individuals, voluntarily associated for the promotion of any object, however benevolent, can be laid down as an unqualified duty. For, every such plan must necessarily, like all other human things, be imperfect. Different views may and will be taken with regard to its expediency. And no man is bound to sustain a scheme the expediency of which, in his own opinion, is even questionable. To make it the duty of all to join the Temperance Society, is to claim for it infallibility, and to place it on the footing of a divine institution. Whether the Society is, or is not calculated to do good, one thing is certain, to wit: that the ground upon which the duty to support it is made to rest, must be left to the judgment of every man. Whether it is or it is not his duty to sustain it, therefore, must depend on the honest convictions of his own mind, in relation to its utility or inutility. An attempt to advance the cause of the Society, by teaching that it is criminal not to become a member of it, is mischievous, because it is an attempt to set up the judgment of fallible men as the rule of duty, and to rob us of the right of *private judgment*.

The connecting of the Temperance Society with the Church, is a measure that has laid the foundation for much mischief. That a close alliance has been formed between the Church and the Society, cannot be denied. If, however, any doubts exist on this subject, it will be sufficient to dispel them by stating several facts, such as, that Temperance Societies are formed under special recommendations of Church authorities, and that official reports are made from time to time to, and received by, these authorities, in relation to their establishment, progress, and effect on the cause of temperance. Thus the Church has not only countenanced these Societies, but has actually and officially received them into its service, and is employing them as

its acknowledged auxiliaries in the work of reformation. To this connexion many serious objections may be made.

1. *It is useless, as it respects the members of the Church, if the Church and the Society are acting on the same plan to promote temperance.* Upon this supposition, why connect the Church with the Society under the distinctive name of a Temperance Society? What conceivable advantage, as it regards temperance, could any person derive from being a member of two Societies, the Church and the Temperance Society, at the same time, if both of them are engaged in promoting the same object and on the same plan? But, if the Society and the Church are promoting temperance on a different plan, a connexion between them is worse than useless—it is mischievous. For there could be no harmony between two Societies, connected together to promote the same object on opposite principles. There must be such a jostling between them, as to endanger the peace of both. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” In either case, therefore, this connexion is objectionable. In the one, it would be useless; in the other, dangerous and mischievous.

2. *It injures the purity and simplicity of the Church.* The Church is a divine institution, and the annexing to it of any human schemes or institutions, forms an unnatural and an unholy alliance. If, under the plea of advancing the interests of the Church, a connexion should be formed between it and any institution that might be deemed useful to the cause of morality and religion, the church would soon exhibit a monstrous figure. It would be so bloated with human inventions, that its real features could not be discerned, and its purity and simplicity would be destroyed. There are many institutions that have as favorable bearing on the interests of religion and morality as the Temperance Society, and have as great a claim to the patronage of the Church. But shall all these be brought into it, and be made the subjects of its special care? Literary institutions are highly important to religion, inasmuch as without the knowledge of letters, the Scriptures could not be read, nor could those qualifications be obtained that are necessary to fit men to give instruction on the doctrines and precepts of reli-

gion. But shall all the schools of this country be connected with the Church? How important are civil governments in restraining and punishing crime, and in securing and protecting religious freedom; but shall Church and State be connected? Even agricultural societies have a favorable bearing on the interests of religion, inasmuch as the improvement of land with its proper culture, affords the means which are necessary towards the propagation of the gospel both at home and abroad. Without money the Church could not be supported. But shall it stretch forth its arms, and receive all such societies into its bosom? What is there in a Temperance Society, that it should procure the special patronage of the Church in preference to other institutions? Is it in its nature more congenial to it? It has certainly not the slightest pretensions to the character of a religious institution. For if it could make all men temperate, this would bring them no nearer to piety, than if they were made honest and industrious. Thousands that are temperate in drinking, are nevertheless hostile to religion. If the Temperance Society can with propriety be connected with the Church, so may every valuable and benevolent institution. Thus the Church, which is entirely of a spiritual nature, would, like Joseph's coat of many colors, or pieces, be a mere patch work. It would be partly civil and secular, and partly spiritual. This mixing the things of men with the things of God, has, in every age, been the great means of corrupting of Christianity. The plan of God's house is laid down in the Scriptures, and so perfectly, that not a piece can be added to it or taken from it without injury. As Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle according to the pattern given in the mount, so we must be careful to add nothing of our own to God's church, lest we defile it.

3. *It injures the peace of the Church.* It could not have been expected, that the measure of effecting reformation by Societies on the principle of entire abstinence, a measure so novel and opposite to preconceived notions and opinions, would have met with the entire approbation of the Christian community. But when these Societies were brought into the Church as its auxiliaries in the cause of temperance, much less could it have

been expected that this step would be regarded as an harmless innovation, and that the members of the Church would make no opposition to it. When attempts were made to introduce these Societies in the Church, under the sanction of its authorities, warm contests with regard to their expediency of course arose, and parties were soon formed. Alienation of affection on the part of brethren, suspension of Christian fellowship in many instances, and in some the destruction of the peace of the Church soon followed.

So important is peace to the prosperity of the Church, that the adoption of no measure that might be the occasion of its interruption can be justified. Measures authorized and required by the Bible are of course excepted. What then made it necessary that Temperance Societies should be introduced into the Church? It had been for ages without institutions of this kind, and wherefore have they now become necessary? Did it need the aid of the plan of entire abstinence? Was it not possible that the sobriety of its members could be preserved without it? Certainly it was possible. For if entire abstinence had been a principle necessary to sobriety it could not have been overlooked by the writers of the Scriptures. The very omission of this principle is a proof of its not being necessary. As then the Church did not need the aid of the Societies for the benefit of its members, why introduce them into it? Why thus unnecessarily disturb its peace? Was its peace esteemed of so little value, that it should be interrupted by the adoption of a measure that cannot be justified by its wants or exigencies, for which there was not the least necessity?

4. *It brings a reproach on Christianity and the Church.* This connexion between the Church and the Temperance Society, is an implied admission on the part of the Church of the insufficiency of Christianity to preserve the temperance of the members of the Church. What an admission is this! And that too coming from the Church! Christianity not able to make Christians temperate! This is a gloomy view of all religion. Of what little value will our holy religion be considered, if its principles are thus acknowledged by the Church itself to be insufficient to guard the pious against the commission of

drunkenness—a vice which even by the light of nature is seen to be degrading. How low has Christianity sunk in the estimation of professed friends, and what cause is given to its enemies to reproach it. If Christianity cannot save from drunkenness, it cannot save from any other vice. In this way the Unitarian scheme may receive strong support.

But the measure by which the interest of this institution was further to be advanced, was to make the giving of the pledge of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit a term of communion. It is said that this measure has been adopted by some congregations of the Christian community. If a congregation of Christians has the right to make one term of communion, it has the right to make as many as it pleases. And as every congregation would have the same right, it might happen that there would be as many different terms of communion as there are churches or congregations. Some congregations might require one thing, and others another thing as a term of communion. Thus the terms of Christian fellowship might be narrowed or widened as fancy might dictate. Some would become full members of the Church by way of this pledge of entire abstinence, others would be admitted without it. And thus endless disputes might occur in relation to the question, who are the real members of Christ's Church. "For he that entereth not in by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." But what man or set of men has a right to prescribe the terms of entrance into the Church? Can it be believed that a subject so important as this, has been left to the discretion of men, and that the founder of it made no particular regulations in regard to it? But the precise term of admission into the Church is laid down in the Scriptures, and consists in a credible profession of faith. He then that complies with this condition has an indefeasible right to be admitted into it, and to enjoy all the privileges of the Church. They therefore who make this pledge a term of Christian fellowship, justly subject themselves to the charge of not only adding to the word of God, but of invading the rights and privileges of Christians, and of usurping the prerogative of the head of the Church.

But does the *not* giving of this pledge so clearly evince the insincerity of a religious profession, as that *the* giving of it should be made a condition of Christian communion? It is not immoral to use ardent spirit. And if it was, no man is required by the Scriptures to pledge himself to abstain from an immoral act in future, before he should be permitted to join the Church. For if he is bound to give a pledge that he will not commit any one sin, he would be equally bound to give a pledge that he will not commit any sin at all. But who would enter into an agreement so perilous? Who durst do it? He that would give such a pledge would furnish a far stronger proof of the want of grace, than he that should refuse to do it. Make the taking of the pledge of entire abstinence, a test! A mere human requirement—a standard by which the genuineness of a religious profession is to be tried, by which the qualifications for full membership in the Church below and for Heaven itself, are to be ascertained! Let this test be once submitted to by the Church, and others will soon be presented, as many as designing or fanatical men may choose to prescribe. The joining of the Colonization or Anti-Slavery Societies would soon be proposed as a test. And let it not be supposed that there is no danger, that the taking of this pledge of abstinence will not be made a test of communion among us. When many grave and pious men openly avow and maintain that the temperate use of ardent spirit, as a drink, is a bad example and is immoral, and that the joining of the Society is a Christian duty; when the greatest zeal is exhibited in fixing odium on those who have independence enough to question its expediency or to hesitate to become members of the Temperance Society; when opposition to it is regarded as opposition to the sacred cause of religion, and as encouragement to drunkenness; who can doubt that the taking of this pledge will generally be made a term of Christian communion? It cannot be denied, that such is the spirit of proscription which has marked the progress of the Society, that, virtually, it operates now as a test; and, unless it be arrested, that it will end in a formal declaration, that the way to secure full membership in the Church, is by a pledge of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirit.

But that which is not less dangerous to the cause of truth is, that the opinion and example of great and good men, should be considered sufficient evidence of the expediency of the Temperance Society. It is asked, would so many learned and good men have joined this Society and recommended it to others, if they had not deemed it an important institution? That a great number of such men have connected themselves with this institution is readily admitted. Among these are some of my most valuable friends. Were I to follow the example of men there are none whose example I would sooner follow than that of many of the members of the Temperance Society. But the Bible, and my long experience, have taught me to receive with caution the opinions of men, and wholly to reject those opinions as authority in matters of faith and practice. The Bible is the only standard of religious truth and morals; and the best judgment we can form of its meaning is our only guide. For, if we abandon our own judgment in order to follow men, we shall be utterly at a loss to know what is duty. We see from the division in the Christian community, that there is a great difference of opinion with regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures. In a religious controversy, we often see the great learning and piety of one side arrayed against equal piety and learning on the other. And the same men have been seen at one time advocating opinions, which at another they have condemned. If, then, we give up our own judgments to other men, whom shall we follow? We cannot follow every man. If we attempt to make a selection, whom shall we select? If learning and piety are to direct in our choice, they are found in men of opposite sentiments. If we fancy, that we see more learning and piety in some men than in others; and if we choose such to be our guides, as we cannot with certainty calculate will not forsake us by abandoning the opinions which they now entertain, we shall have no certainty that our own purposes are fixed. In the midst of this uncertainty our own judgments, founded on the infallible word of God, must be our guide in all cases of faith and practice. Implicit confidence in men, is a weakness, and a manifest dereliction of duty. For what purpose has God given us reason and his Holy Word?

And why has he commanded us to search his Word if other men are to judge for us? In all ages of the Church the proneness of men to surrender themselves to the guidance of others in religious matters, has been productive of great mischief. To what cause shall we ascribe the loss of Christian liberty for so many ages? Was it not mainly owing to an implicit confidence in men? We have lately had a solemn warning to guard against popery, and this warning is not unnecessary. One of the greatest guards we can place over our religious liberty is to think for ourselves, and to reject as of insufficient authority the doctrines and commandments of men. Are there not in the present age strong symptoms of a disposition to that implicit confidence in others which is the ground work of papistical errors and impositions? Could any plain man believe, except on human authority, that the Bible teaches that the temperate use of ardent spirit or strong drink, is immoral? If the Christian community, however, is prepared to receive such a doctrine, is it not ready to receive any opinion, however erroneous? And is not the way opening for the introduction of that dominion over the mind and conscience, which, whether it be called popery or not, is fatal to the interests of Christianity?

Then, in view of those opinions and measures that have been so generally adopted and propagated by the advocates of the Temperance Society, in order to carry it into full and successful operation, I could not become a member of it, without placing myself under a responsibility which I was unwilling to sustain. For, I should have considered myself not only as recommending a Society, the expediency of whose plan of reformation I questioned, but as countenancing divers mischievous doctrines which are advocated not only by individuals, but maintained in the public and official acts of the Society itself, and upon the support of which, its progress, if not its existence, appeared to me essentially to depend. For let the connexion between the Society and the Church be dissolved, and the joining of it be no longer considered a Christian duty; let the temperate use of strong drink be no longer declared sinful; and what would be its future progress? Would it not cease to exist? Let those judge who have noticed with attention the Society in its commencement and progress to the present time.

But it is said, *that the Temperance Society has done much good; that it has produced great reformation.* The practical benefits of any institution are not to be judged of by temporary, but by permanent, results. Whether the Society has been long enough in operation to enable us to decide on its great benefits, might be questioned by those less sceptical than myself. Nothing but time can determine a question of this nature. The most plausible schemes, when submitted to this test, have disappointed the most sanguine, and have shown the fallacy of human calculation. The enthusiasm with which new plans are embraced disposes the mind to magnify their importance, and to place to their credit an influence to which they are not entitled. I am not disposed to rob the Society of its just due; but is not that reformation which is ascribed to its influence, if it exist at all, mainly, perhaps wholly, attributable to another cause? Is it not in a great degree to be attributed to a more general diffusion of the principles of our holy religion? The Church in this country, at no period of its history, has witnessed such laborious and unwearied zeal in its ministers in preaching the gospel; so great and so persevering exertions in putting the Scriptures into the hands of almost every individual. The effect of these things on the morals of the community must have been considerable; and it is sufficient to account for any favorable change which may have taken place in relation to the morals of the community; and nothing is wanting to effect an entire reformation of the whole world, but the bringing of it under the efficacious influence of the gospel.

Such is the nature of the gospel, that where it is preached in its purity, it exerts a salutary influence on the body of a whole community; raises the standard of morals, and moulds men to steady habits. And for the most part this influence is so gradual, that its full power is not readily seen and admitted. It is on this account therefore, that that reformation which has been effected by the gospel is claimed by the Temperance Society. It has reaped where it has not sown, and it has gathered where it has not strewed. Let Christianity be entirely abolished, and the weakness of the Society in restraining the vice of intemperance would be clearly seen, and fully acknowl-

edged. It is only in the gospel that drunkenness as a sin in all its atrocity, and that the motives which are the most powerful to restrain it, are exhibited. Whether the Society is doing good or not, one thing is certain, that the gospel is competent to produce all that reformation that is ascribed to the influence of the Society ; and therefore there is more danger of robbing the gospel, than there is of robbing the Society of the merit of the work of reformation.

But of the proofs of the good that has flowed from the Temperance Society, some things have been mentioned, to say the least, that are of doubtful character. It is said that it has produced a great diminution of the quantity of ardent spirit in some parts of the country. But if this be a fact, whether it is to be ascribed to the influence of the Society, or to other causes, it furnishes no conclusive evidence, that there is consequently a greater amount of temperance. For, there are other intoxicating drinks that are equally as accessible as ardent spirit. And it has been observed that there is now a much freer use of fermented liquors, than formerly. And this effect is ascribed by some of the warmest advocates of the principle of reformation by entire abstinence, to this principle not being carried far enough by the Society, and urged as a reason why it should be applied to every thing that intoxicates. But if nothing could intoxicate but ardent spirit, still a diminution of the quantity that is used, would not be satisfactory evidence of a less amount of intemperance. For temperance or intemperance depends on the manner of its use. There may therefore be more drunkenness where a less, than where a greater quantity of ardent spirit is used. Fifty persons may, for example, drink temperately that quantity, the half of which when used intemperately would intoxicate one hundred. Of the proofs, then, which may be exhibited of the beneficial results of the Temperance Society, the diminution of the quantity of ardent spirit that has been used, admitting this to be a fact, cannot fairly be considered as one.

But there is one thing that has been brought forward in proof of the benefits derived from this Society, that deserves particular notice. It is said, that the success of this Society

paves the way for the reception of the gospel; and that revivals of religion are so dependent on successful operations of Temperance Societies, that a revival of religion is not likely to be had in places in which these operations are unsuccessful. If, however, such is the fact, is not the success of the Apostles in producing the greatest reformation the world had ever witnessed, remarkable? They, it seems, relied on the preaching of the gospel, as the means of reformation, and by this they subdued innumerable multitudes to the obedience of the faith. And in this work they encountered no less difficulties than ministers of the present time. In the account that the Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, gives of the character of the heathen world, he shows that it was sunk to the lowest degree of moral degradation. But out of this mass of corruption he instrumentally raised a great number of churches, which, for piety and purity of morals, have never been surpassed. This was the case though there were no Temperance Societies that went before him to prepare his way. Moreover, is it not equally remarkable, that the gospel, whose professed object is to reform, cannot accomplish its work until a reformation is begun by the Temperance Society? The gospel can reform, if a reformation is first commenced. Is it the way to commence a reformation by the Temperance Society in order to make it possible for the gospel to do its work? But if the gospel can change a man's heart and thereby make him a good man, it is strange, that it should in any wise be dependent on a Society to help it to make him temperate. But it is said, men must be temperate before they can receive any benefit from the preaching of the gospel. It should be recollected that if it be necessary, that men should be temperate before they can receive any benefit from preaching, they must also be temperate before they can enter into those engagements that are requisite for the formation of a Temperance Society. For, a drunkard is as unfit to give a pledge of abstinence, as to hear the gospel preached. If, then, it is necessary to prepare the way for the reception of the gospel by first making men temperate by Temperance Societies; it is equally necessary to make men sober to prepare the way for the formation of Temperance So-

cieties. But what shall be done to make men temperate, that a way may be thus prepared for the formation of these Societies?

What connexion is there between a revival of religion and the formation of a Temperance Society? Does the joining of the Society make a man a fitter or a more meritorious subject for the reception of the gospel? Revivals of religion, we are told by the highest authority, are the effects of mere grace without the smallest regard to merit. But revivals of religion, it is said, are seen to follow Temperance Societies. Is this sufficient evidence that the Societies produce the revivals? Suppose a revival should occur after the formation of a Colonization Society. Would it be evidence, that such a Society was the cause of it? Temperance Societies have been formed in many places, and no revivals have followed them.

But let it be admitted, that the object of the Society is effected, and that men are made sober by joining it: Would their temperance pave the way for their immediate conversion? Would it bring about a revival of religion? Would not the great obstacle to revivals, unbelief, still exist, which requires Almighty power to overcome it? It would be absurd to suppose, that the exertion of this power is made more easy on account of the morality of the subject of it. And it would be contrary to the Scripture to suppose that it would be exerted for the sake of any moral virtue.

Again, if the Temperance Society by pledges and promises has been so successful in carrying forward the work of making people sober, why not with pledges and promises attack every other vice? Is intemperance in drinking the only vice worthy of our zeal for its abolition? There are other vices as odious, and as pernicious to human society, and which as effectually exclude from the kingdom of heaven, as drunkenness. Farther, can no other vice be successfully opposed by Societies? If drunkenness can be put down by a pledge, so, I should think, may every other vicious practice. For, a promise to abstain from one vicious practice would be equally binding, as a promise to abstain from another, and I should suppose, would be as likely to be fulfilled. Let then, gluttony, lying, profane

swearing, stealing, and other enormous vices have their respective Societies. Then forthwith the work of universal reformation will be commenced. Gluttony, it is true, cannot be attacked by a pledge of entire abstinence; but a promise to eat temperately may be required, which is easily made, and would be as binding as a promise to abstain from the use of ardent spirit. And many rules and regulations may be made by a Society formed for the promotion of temperance in eating, that would be found important; such, for example, as that every man should be confined to one dish and that of the coarsest and plainest kind. Moreover, as indulgence increases the appetite, and thus renders temperance more difficult, every member of the Society should be enjoined to eat as little and as seldom as possible. Surely, a Society that shall be able to put down gluttony will effect an important object. There is no vice more odious or injurious. It disqualifies for the performance of every duty, gradually saps the human constitution, lays the foundation for divers diseases, brings on premature old age, and shortens the life of man. How many millions have fallen victims to an untimely grave by intemperance in eating! It is believed, from the best evidence, that more of the human race are destroyed by intemperance in eating than by intemperance in drinking. Let, then, every species of immorality have its own distinct Society, founded on such principles, and under such regulations, as shall be suited to the nature of each, and then we shall have a pretty good plan of reformation. A further improvement of the plan, (at least, much trouble might be saved by such an extension of the views of the philanthropist,) would be, to have one grand association against vice in the lump, so that all persons who may join it, shall be required to enter into a solemn obligation to relinquish every vice and become a sober and useful member of general society. Thus, the influence of the gospel in forming the moral character of the community may be dispensed with, and the business of reformation be given up to Societies.

But, admitting that the Temperance Society has done much good, has it not also done much evil? We are not to judge of the value of an institution solely from the immediate benefits

that may flow from it. When these benefits are obtained by the sacrifice of great and important principles, the *evil* is greater than the *good*. Suppose the Legislature of this State, being deeply impressed by a consideration of the evils of intemperance, should pass a law with severe penalties, that no person should hereafter use any intoxicating drink. Such a law might be the means of restraining many persons from intoxication. But would not such a law, by violating the principles of civil liberty, produce more injury than good? The preservation of civil liberty is of more value than the restraining of some men from intoxication. If the Temperance Society has been instrumental in promoting temperance, has it not been also instrumental in promoting dangerous principles. Drunkenness is a great evil; but if it is to be put down at the expense of any one important principle in morality or religion, the injury would be greater than the benefit produced.

If, then, good is derived from the Temperance Society, is there no evil also? Is there no evil in introducing a plan of reform, founded on the principle of entire abstinence as necessary to temperance, a principle unknown to the Scriptures, thereby practically denying a most important truth, that the Bible is a sufficient rule of faith and practice? This is a truth, the rejection of which, has opened a door to the introduction of the greatest errors, and which saps the foundation of all morality and religion. Is there no evil in intolerance? No evil in carrying on a reform on the plan of proscription? No evil in infringing the important and inalienable right of private judgment?—a right, the exercise of which, free from all human control, is essential to correct moral action. Are not these evils, and do they not grow out of the plan of the Society? And are not these evils greater than its benefits?

The warm contention that exists at this time in the Christian community in relation to the subject of temperance, cannot be viewed without wonder and grief. The dispute is not whether drunkenness is a vice, or temperance a virtue; whether the one should be suppressed, or the other promoted. But the contest is about the mode of being temperate. One mode is prescribed, and that is entire abstinence from the use of

ardent spirit, and this is insisted on as essential. If a man exhibits an example of temperance by the most moderate use of ardent spirit, it will not suffice: he must entirely abstain. Temperance in no other way, it is contended, is sufficient. How ridiculous is such a contest! As well may a man quarrel with his neighbor about his mode of keeping himself temperate in eating, as to quarrel with him about his mode of keeping himself temperate in drinking. Is it not astonishing, that the Christian community should be wasting its energies in a dispute of this kind?—a dispute on the mode of being temperate? Can it be a matter of such importance how a man keeps himself sober, that it should excite bitter and angry feelings among those who profess a religion that inculcates charity and forbearance towards all men, especially to the household of faith? To such a height has this contest grown, that vital piety to the great grief of many good men, has been seriously injured. Who, without the deepest mortification, can look at the bitterness, the strifes, the denouncements, that have sprung from this unprofitable dispute? Can this contention exist much longer? Surely, there is yet enough moderation and piety left among us to arrest the progress of so great an evil.

I am not unaware of the difficulty of so expressing my views on the subject of this communication as to escape misapprehension. Although I have contended for the liberty of using ardent spirit as a drink, I would not be understood as giving the smallest countenance to such a use of this or any other liquor of an intoxicating nature, as would be inconsistent with the most rigid rules of temperance; or, as encouraging others in such a frequent and habitual use of any intoxicating drink as would create an unnatural and inordinate appetite. Drunkenness, I repeat, is a vice so detestable in itself, and so dreadful in its consequences, that too great caution cannot be used in guarding against it. I would have it understood, also, that, when I contend for the temperate use of ardent spirit, it is not for the sake of the article itself, to which I attach little or no importance, but purely for the sake of principle,—the right to use it or not, according to the pleasure of every one. It doubtless appears to many, that a liberty in so small a matter

may be surrendered without injury. But it should be recollected, that if an encroachment is suffered to be made on Christian liberty in one thing, it may be demanded in another; and thus a way may be paved for greater and more serious invasions. It is in small things that encroachments are made on Christian liberty with the least suspicion of injury. By such encroachments no injury is immediately felt, no alarm is given that might lead to resistance. One encroachment is made after another, gradually increasing in magnitude, until a spiritual tyranny is set up, which it would be difficult to overturn.

The enjoyment of liberty, even in small and indifferent things, is of much more consequence in personal religion than is generally supposed. When the conscience feels itself shackled in relation to the use of such things, a door is opened for endless superstitions, that greatly disturb the peace and tranquillity of the mind. Persons who see such danger in ardent spirit as to feel conscientiously bound to avoid even the taste of it, will apprehend danger in every thing. Soon they become such slaves to their fears, that those things which were designed as blessings, will be considered as so many snares laid for their destruction. "Many," says Calvin, that celebrated reformer, "in the present age, think it a folly to raise disputes concerning the free use of meats, of days, and of habits, and similar subjects, considering these things as nugatory; but they are of greater importance than is generally believed. For, when the conscience has once fallen into the snare, it enters into a long and inextricable labyrinth, from which it is afterwards difficult to escape; if a man begins to doubt of the lawfulness of using flax in sheets, handkerchiefs, napkins, and table cloths, neither will he be certain respecting hemp, and at last he will doubt of the lawfulness of using oakum; for he will consider with himself, whether he cannot eat without table cloths, whether he cannot do without handkerchiefs or napkins. If any one imagines delicate food to be unlawful, he will ere long have no tranquillity before God in eating bread and common viands, while he remembers that he might support his body with meat of a quality still inferior. If he hesitate respecting good wine, he will afterwards be unable, with any peace of con-

science, to drink the most vapid, and at last he will not presume to touch pure and wholesome water. In short, he will come to think it criminal to step over a twig that lies across his path."—*Calvin's Institutes*, vol. 2, chap. 19, sec. 7.

I would not, however, be understood as meaning to assert, that to enjoy Christian liberty, we must be actually in the exercise of it. It is sufficient that a man knows that he can, if he pleases, use any of God's creatures for food or drink, if received with thanksgiving, without fears of sinning. This is true Christian liberty. He, therefore, who never drinks ardent spirit at all, may enjoy as perfect liberty with regard to its use, as one who uses it every day. This is the sort of liberty which is contended for, the loss of which gives a man ever as a prey to superstition.

From all I have said in this communication, I would not be understood as discouraging combined effort to put down intemperance. Concentration of effort, when directed to proper objects, and conducted on proper and Scriptural principles, may produce valuable effects. It is not the professed object of the Society, which is to suppress drunkenness—for that is benevolent, and meets with the approbation of every good man; or the promotion of it by united effort; but the plan of its association, and its measures to carry it into effect, to which I have objected, and which I believe are calculated to injure, rather than promote the cause of temperance. Who does not see the injury that this cause is likely to sustain? Things have been pushed to extremities. Doctrines have been urged subversive of the principles of Christian liberty, and the rights of private judgment; unreasonable restrictions imposed—restrictions tending to re-action—to the throwing off of those that are reasonable—to licentiousness. Can men be reformed by teaching the most unreasonable doctrines?—that the regulation of their appetites is of no avail, whether they drink little or much, whether they be temperate or intemperate in the use of ardent spirit, they are equally guilty of a moral wrong, thereby confounding the distinction between virtue and vice, placing the good man on a footing with the wicked, the sober with the drunkard. Can tenets like these promote the cause of tem-

perance? The boldness and novelty of such opinions may give a shock to the public mind, and produce something like a suspension of the power of resistance, a kind of acquiescence; and the cause of temperance may appear to advance; but the public mind will recover from this shock, it will react,—and this cause must eventually suffer loss.

Thus, agreeably to your request, I have given you the reasons for withholding my name from the Temperance Society. That I differ on this subject from many good and valuable men, and especially many of those with whom I have long been in the habit of acting in promoting the great cause of religion, is to me a matter of regret. But let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. I neither wish to dictate to others, nor do I allow them to dictate to me. And as the Apostle said to the Collossians, "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or drink." Col. 2. 16. So I say, let no man judge *me* in relation to such things. Does any one think it expedient for him to abstain from strong drink? Let him abstain. Does another think it not expedient? Let him use his liberty in this respect. All are bound by the law of God to be temperate; but let every man take that method by which he believes this object can be best obtained. Doubtless, it would be expedient for many to lay aside the use, not only of ardent spirit, but also of all drinks of an intoxicating nature. But of this they must be their own judges. They act on their own responsibility.

In conclusion, I would remark, that a conduct agreeable to our holy profession will do more to advance the cause of temperance in the congregation which, in the Providence of God, has been committed to our care, than can be done by all the zeal which could be displayed in favor of the Temperance Society.

I am yours, &c.

C. R.

ERRATUM. Page 17, third line from bottom, for "(Gurse Paraphrase)," read (Guyse's Paraphrase.)

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