

William Euell
DR. SPRAGUE'S

REPLY

TO

PROFESSOR STUART'S LETTER

ADDRESSED TO HIM THROUGH THE

AMERICAN TEMPERANCE INTELLIGENCER OF AUGUST, 1835,

RELATIVE TO HIS LATE

SERMON ON THE EXCLUSION OF WINE

FROM THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

ALBANY:

PRINTED BY PACKARD AND VAN BENTHUYSEN.

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1835.

REV. PROFESSOR STUART:

Dear Sir,

In preaching, and especially in publishing, the sermon on *the exclusion of wine from the Lord's supper*, which has given occasion to your letter addressed to me, in the last No. of the *Temperance Intelligencer*, I was well aware that I was taking a step which could not escape observation, and which must, of course, be subjected to a severe scrutiny. But I had determined to leave the sermon in the hands of the public, and let it take its chance whether for good or evil, without vindicating it from any exceptions, or noticing any strictures which it might call forth; and to this determination I should have adhered, so far as the *sermon** was concerned, if *you* had not thought proper to honor me with a public letter. Your right to address me in this way, I fully recognize; and especially, in view of my having made a distinct allusion in my sermon, to your *Essay* in the *Temperance Intelligencer* of June, as furnishing one of the reasons for bringing the subject before my congregation. I am induced to reply to your letter, partly from the respect which I bear for your character, and partly from other considerations; though I feel constrained to say, that I cannot commit myself

* The attack upon my *character* by a writer in "*Zion's Herald*," under the signature of "*Theophilus*," is another matter.

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to a protracted correspondence, or even hold myself pledged to reply to any future communications. I make this explicit statement the rather, as I infer from an intimation in your letter, that you have a goodly number of puzzling interrogatories still in store for me, when those which you have already put, shall have been disposed of. I say then frankly that my professional duties are too numerous and urgent, to allow my attention to be diverted by a lengthened discussion of this subject ; that I am happy to see that it is in a way to be thoroughly examined by other men who are more competent to do it justice, and have more leisure to discuss it, than myself ; and that, in view of these circumstances, both you and the public must expect that this will be the first and the last of my communications.

I will take up the several queries suggested in your letter, and give to each the best answer that I can. My limits will require that I should be brief under each head, and should omit many things which seem to me to have an important bearing on the discussion ; nevertheless I shall state those considerations which I deem most important ; and if those which I *do* state have no weight, I freely acknowledge that those which I do *not* state, must pass for nothing.

After quoting from my sermon the following sentences—" There is no occasion for Hebrew learning, or Arabic learning, or any other learning than plain English, to settle this question. The Master himself hath settled it "—you say, " But what, I beseech you, are we to understand by this ? Did the Master then speak English at the institution of the Lord's Supper ? Did he make use of our word *wine* in the same sense in which we now employ it ? I had always supposed

“ that in a dispute about the proper meaning of a word
 “ in the Scriptures, the only ultimate resort is to the
 “ original Hebrew or Greek of them. Do you mean to
 “ defend the doctrine that such an appeal in a contro-
 “ verted case is unnecessary and out of place? And is
 “ it a Protestant principle that such an appeal shall not
 “ be made? ”

No, my dear Sir, I did not mean to defend any such doctrine, and I am sure you have too much candour and good sense ever to have thought of *seriously* attributing to me any such intention. I meant to assume the fact, not that the translators of the Scriptures were infallible, but that *the translation which they have given us, is, in this instance, correct*; and on this ground I said, and certainly should say again, under similar circumstances, that no other learning than plain English is necessary to settle this question. You yourself acknowledge that wine (*οἶνος*) was used at the original institution of the Supper: then in order to show that our Saviour “ *did* make use of our word *wine* in the same sense in which we employ it,” I have only to show that the wine which was used on that occasion, was the juice of the grape in a fermented state. The proof of this would involve the answer to one of your main inquiries, which must be reserved for its appropriate place. At present I assume the fact that it was so; and on it I build the conclusion that our Saviour used the word *wine* in the same sense in which we use it, and of course that our translation is liable to no exceptions. If I fail of the proof in its proper place, my conclusion must, of necessity, be abandoned.

You may possibly think me somewhat of an anti-orientalist in expressing so much regard for the transla-

tion. But I assure you that it is not from any want of respect to Greek or Hebrew learning that I do this: I honor those who have devoted themselves to deep and laborious research into the original languages of scripture, and no one do I honor more than the man who has taken the lead in this department of study in our own country. But still I cannot think that the translation ought to be set aside, or even called in question, but for good reasons; especially as the great mass of people are obliged to rely upon it, and whatever serves to unsettle their faith in the translation, is adapted to diminish their general confidence in the scriptures themselves. I know not in how many instances, since the discussion about *yayin* and *tirosh*, has been going forward, I have heard intelligent men remark that, if these things are so, there is no Bible for *them*; as they can read neither Greek nor Hebrew. You will observe that I do not mention this as a reason for not appealing from the translation where the translation is really wrong or defective; but only as an argument for not appealing from it *unnecessarily*; especially where, as in your own case, there would seem to be a virtual acknowledgment that it is correct.

In your next paragraph you say, "But supposing now that you concede to us that such an appeal should be made" [i. e. an appeal to the original languages of scripture] "(which I may presume your candour will concede); then I ask how the fruit of the vine is to be understood? If the mere phraseology, or the mere English translation is to decide this, why then *wine* is out of the question. *The fruit of the vine* in its plainest, most obvious and literal sense, means neither more nor less than *grapes*. *Grapes*

“ then and bread are to be the elements of the Lord’s
 “ Supper ; for in vain do we seek for the explicit de-
 “ claration that *wine* was drank there by the Saviour
 “ and his apostles.”

But it *is* said explicitly that they *drank* the fruit of the vine ; and did you ever hear of an individual drinking *grapes*? The truth is that this passage not only *admits* the construction that the fruit of the vine was the *juice* of the grape, but it admits of *no other* ; and hence I cannot see why you should have suggested it to me in the form of a difficulty ; or how it bears more unfavorably upon my doctrine than yours. You go on to add, “ But you will say, ‘ This is to be *figuratively* construed.’ You put your construction upon it, and make it mean wine, i. e. the Greek *οινος*.” I do indeed put *my* construction upon it ; but it so happens that in doing so, I put *yours* upon it also ; for in the very next sentence you proceed to say, “ I will not complain now of the liberty which you here take with the words, *fruit of the vine*. I also believe that wine, i. e. *οινος*, was drank at the sacrament in its origin ; because I cannot see why the *cup* should be named, and *drinking* be spoken of, unless such was the case.” Here then we are brought to a very happy issue of this part of the controversy ;—that is, precisely to the same point, and for aught that appears, in precisely the same way. I only complain that you should have gravely put me to the proof of that of which you yourself had no doubt ; in other words, that you should have imposed upon me the necessity of showing that men do not drink grapes, when, in the very next paragraph, you intended generously to concede what you had called upon me to prove.

After admonishing me that "the matter is not yet at an end," and mentioning the various Hebrew words which the Jews employed to designate different kinds of wine, you proceed as follows:—"Now here we have at least *five* different names in Hebrew, two of them for *must* or *new wine*, and three for different sorts or qualities of fermented wine, and all these are rendered by the Septuagint translators, by one and the same Greek word *οἶνος*; which also is the new Testament word to designate all sorts of wine. Instead then of its being ascertained by the *English* new Testament, what *wine* means, we are not definitely informed by the original Greek itself, which of all the *five* kinds of wine, or rather of "the fruit of the vine," was exhibited at the table of our Lord. If the word *οἶνος* itself had been used, i. e. *wine* instead of *fruit of the vine*, it would have still left us in the same condition, viz. uncertain whether the first, second, third, fourth or fifth kind of wine, was used by our Saviour and his disciples. Will you show us, my dear Sir, *how* this question is to be determined? We may then have a stand point, from which we can take a new survey of the subject. Until then we may well suppose that "the fruit of the vine" may be either of the five kinds of wine above noted, inasmuch as the Saviour has not been particular in his designation. You will allow us to insist on some specific proof here, before we can take it for granted that your position is certain. We wish to know *how* the Master has settled it," and what is the proof that he has decided that such wine as we now employ was used by Him at the sacramental table."

My first remark under this head is that, notwith-

standing you have given us *five* words to designate as many different kinds of wine, the only distinction with which we are concerned, so far as I can see, is that which exists between fermented wine and the unfermented juice of the grape ; for no position which I have taken in my sermon, requires me to show what particular *kind* of fermented wine was used ; as we admit that that is an unimportant matter *now* ; that Port, Madeira, Teneriffe, Malaga, &c. may be used with equal propriety. Without expressing any opinion then, as to the question whether the unfermented juice of the grape *may* not be used in the Lord's Supper at this day, I am going to attempt to prove that it *was* not used at its original institution ; and that, in the example of Christ and his Apostles, we have our warrant for using on that occasion FERMENTED WINE.

1. My first argument is drawn from the fact that יַיִן (*yayin*) which you say means fermented wine, was not only allowed as a drink, but was spoken of as a blessing, under the old Testament dispensation. I shall not dwell much on the proof of this, as it has just been presented at length, and with great ability, by a correspondent, (J. M.) of the New-York Observer. I will only say that it was *yayin* which the Nazarite had an express permission to drink when the days of his separation were ended. (Num. vi. 19, 20.) It was *yayin* which the Psalmist, in enumerating some of the blessings of Providence, mentioned in immediate connexion with bread and oil. (Psalm civ. 14, 15.) It was *yayin* which God, by the prophet Amos, promised to the people of Israel, among various other blessings, on their being restored from captivity. (Amos ix. 14.) It was *yayin* by which the Holy Ghost was pleased to

represent the blessings of the New Covenant, which all were invited to accept without money and without price. (Isaiah lv. 1.) I might multiply quotations almost indefinitely to the same point, but the passages to which I have already referred are enough to show, not only that fermented wine was actually used under the ancient dispensation, but that it was regarded both by God and man as a blessing. If this be so, may I not at least ask, where is the *improbability* that it was used at the time of our Saviour, and in the sacramental supper?

3. *It was exclusively yayin, or fermented wine, which was prescribed by divine authority to be used in the service of the temple.* (Ex. xxix. 40; and Num. xxviii. 7.) Now I ask, if it was not a sin to use it for religious purposes under the ancient dispensation,—if the use of it was even expressly enjoined by God himself, where is the evidence that it is wrong to use it for similar purposes under the present dispensation? Nay, does not the fact that God prescribed it for the service of the temple, infer the probability that Christ used it in the institution of the supper, unless you have something to show to the contrary? That it had been used for ages in the daily offerings of the temple you certainly will not question: that it was used in those services at the time of our Saviour's advent, I can see no reason to doubt: and as the Passover was kept in Jerusalem, there is every ground for believing that the same kind of wine was used as in the ordinary service of the temple. At any rate, whoever asserts the contrary, is most unquestionably bound to prove it.

3. My next argument is drawn from *the celebrated case of the church at Corinth*, of which we have an ac-

count in the latter part of the eleventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. It is readily conceded that there is nothing in the language which our Saviour employed at the original institution of the Supper, from which it can be determined whether it was fermented wine, or the unfermented juice of the grape, which was used on that occasion ; as "the fruit of the vine" may legitimately mean either. But within a few years after our Lord's ascension, there was a church established through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul, in the city of Corinth. Paul must have understood perfectly the proper manner of celebrating the ordinance of the Supper ; for he expressly declares that he "received it of the Lord." And it were a reflection upon his character as a minister and an Apostle, to suppose that he should not have made the Corinthians acquainted with every thing essential to the right observance of it ; and that if the unfermented juice of the grape were the article to be used, that he should not have distinctly told them so. But it is certain that the Corinthians drank intoxicating wine ; for the Apostle informs us that some of them actually became "drunken." Perhaps it may be said that this proves nothing more than that they perverted the ordinance by the use of an improper beverage. I reply that the whole strain of the Apostle's remarks proves the contrary. He reproves them for drunkenness and irregularity, but not an intimation does he give that they have fallen into any error in respect to the article to be used in the service. If their error had really consisted in drinking fermented wine, is it not passing strange that the Apostle when he set himself formally to rebuke them on the occasion, did not even advert to that which, on the principle I am oppo-

ing, must have constituted the root of the whole evil? Especially is not this a most unaccountable omission, when it is remembered that he wrote under divine inspiration, and for the benefit of the church in all coming ages? Is it to be supposed for a moment that an Apostle, and especially the Holy Ghost who inspired him, should have witnessed such a dangerous innovation, without setting up a barrier against its progress, by a plain and pungent rebuke? Suppose it were a universally conceded point now that the unfermented juice of the grape is the only authorized beverage to be used in the communion, and some church, in imitation of the example of the Corinthians, were so far to deviate from the right way, as to substitute fermented wine, and get drunk upon it; what kind of a rebuke should any of us be disposed to administer, especially what kind of a rebuke would a temperance man administer, for such an irregularity? Would he be satisfied with reproving the drunkenness, or would he not look farther, to the cause of it? Would he not say, "You have made an unhallowed invasion of the ordinance by setting aside the article which the Saviour prescribed, and which has been universally used in the church, and substituting an intoxicating drink; and it is no wonder that you have fallen into such criminal excesses?" Under such circumstances, this certainly would be a natural rebuke; such as the occasion would obviously call for. But no *such* rebuke came from the Apostle. Could the occasion for it then have existed? Or was he not a Temperance man?

4. I appeal to *ecclesiastical history* in support of my position. I have never seen an intimation in the history of the christian church, nor heard of an individual

that had, that the unfermented juice of the grape was *ever* used in the sacrament of the supper. At any rate, it has not been used in our day, nor in the days of our fathers, or our forefathers, to any period of antiquity to which we can go back. Now I ask whether this is not a most speaking silence in ecclesiastical history, in favor of the conclusion that it was never used at all? If it had been the beverage with which Christ instituted the ordinance, and especially if it had been wrong to use any other, is it not marvellous indeed that fermented wine should have been introduced, and yet no record remain of the unhallowed innovation? Various other innovations in reference to this ordinance are distinctly marked, but to this no author that I have heard of even alludes. Could this have been so, if such an innovation had ever occurred? And if it did not occur, was not fermented wine originally used in the communion?

5. I have yet another authority to urge in proof of my doctrine, which I hope you will not be disposed to gainsay, as it is one for which I have been accustomed to entertain a high respect: Pardon me for saying *it is the authority of PROFESSOR STUART himself*. In your Essay published in the Temperance Intelligencer of June, 1835, two months before the publication of your letter to me, you have the following exceedingly pertinent and judicious remarks: "But here again, it will
 " probably be said that the argument against alcoholic
 " drinks of all kinds, must prove too much, because it
 " will prove that Jesus and his disciples who drank
 " wine, did partake of drink which was injurious, and
 " which therefore should be prohibited, in case the
 " principle that I am defending be allowed. The read-

“ er will observe, however, that my argument has all along and throughout been directed against the frequent and common use of alcoholic drinks. To say now that because such a use must be injurious, and therefore should be prohibited, is quite a different position from saying that an occasional use of wine and drink less strong, is altogether prohibited.” Again : “ It is indeed only on sacramental occasions that a thorough disciple of Temperance at the present time, will feel disposed to taste of any liquor of this nature ;” (including fermented wine.) “ Here the example of Christ and his disciples, would seem to give a sanction to the use of wine, which may justly remove all scruples respecting it.”

Now I insist upon it, if I have not proved my position, Professor Stuart is no authority. But really, my dear Sir, I cannot express all the surprize that I feel that you should have raised up this second man of straw for me to contend with, when, in your Essay published but two short months before, you had considered the very thing which you now call upon me to prove as so clear, that you might take it for granted without any proof. If you have gained “ new light,” would it not be more fraternal that you should endeavor to impart it to me, and let me into the secret of your conversion from the error which you held two months ago, than that you should leave me to grope in the fog from which you have just emerged, and even challenge me to a defence of your recent error. If your views have undergone no change within this short period, then I must be permitted, notwithstanding the question you have proposed, and the earnestness with which you call for an answer, still to claim you as a

fellow-worker with me in proving that fermented wine was used at the communion ; and in this case, I submit it to you, whether the public should not do us the justice to acknowledge that we have together made out “ a stand point from which we can take a new survey of the subject.”

I am led next by the course of your remarks to consider the subject of *DILUTING* wine at the Lord's table. And here I am happy to find that the questions proposed in your letter are entirely consistent with the views contained in your Essay.

You say, “ How can it be taken for granted that the “ wine was drank unmixed with water, when all the “ sober men of surrounding heathen nations, looked on “ such a practice as belonging only to drunkards or “ lovers of the cup ? The remarks you make on this “ subject seem to imply, that if a man were to mix “ water with his wine at the sacrament, it would be a “ profanation of that ordinance. Is it to be supposed “ then that an essential part of commemorating the “ Lord's death consists in swallowing a given portion “ of undiluted alcohol in wine ? Is it—can it be this “ which gives efficacy to such an ordinance, or is it “ rational to suppose that pious Hebrews, like temperate Greeks and Romans, *diluted* their wine, when “ they drank it ? ”

Now admitting the fact that it *was* the custom of surrounding heathen nations to drink their wine mixed with water, and without stopping to inquire whether the reason of this might not have been that it would give them an opportunity of enjoying their cups the longer without intoxication,—I am constrained to say that your conclusion from this fact seems to me entire-

ly unwarranted. What! Is the fact that "temperate Greeks and Romans" diluted *their* wine, to be taken as evidence that the Hebrews did the same, when there is not the shadow of such an intimation in any of the writings either of the Old or New Testament? Especially, can we infer from any usage of the heathen on this subject, any thing in respect to the mode in which the Hebrews drank wine at their *religious festivals*? I see not why you might not with equal reason select any other indifferent custom of the Heathen world, and infer that it prevailed among the Jews, though the supposition should not be sustained by the least particle of evidence. In respect to the question whether it is "to be supposed that an essential part of commemorating the Lord's death, consists in swallowing a given portion of undiluted alcohol in wine," I frankly confess that I do not comprehend your meaning. I will however undertake to answer the question, if not in public, yet in private, when you will show me that alcohol ever did, or ever can, exist *undiluted* in wine.

You proceed with your questions:—"Is it preposterous to call a man a *brandy-drinker*, or a *spirit-drinker*, who mingles half or two-thirds water with his brandy? Is not this almost exclusively the method in which these drinks are used? Yet common parlance never makes a man a *brandy-drinker* any the less, because he dilutes with water. How then are you going to show us that Christ and his disciples did not drink their wine at the last supper diluted? And how can it be shown that this was not drinking wine?"

This argument from "common parlance" has certainly some plausibility; but I am greatly deceived if

it will bear an examination. I admit that it is *not* “preposterous to call a man a brandy drinker or spirit drinker, who mingles half or two-thirds water with his brandy;” but I beg you to observe that this proposition is *not* analagous to the one in which the use of wine is spoken of in the institution of the supper. Christ says *not* a word about wine *drinkers*, but he says, “I will not drink henceforth of *the fruit of the vine,*” &c. He had the cup then before him,—perhaps in his hand, and he speaks of it as “*the fruit of the vine.*” Now while I admit that “common parlance” allows a man to be called “a brandy drinker, or a spirit drinker, who mingles half or two-thirds water with his brandy,” or if you please, allows a man to be called a wine drinker, who mingles half or two-thirds water with his wine, I ask *you*, my dear Sir, whether “common parlance” would justify you in taking into your hands a cup of brandy and water, or wine and water, and speaking of it in the same definite manner as our Saviour did, only as brandy or wine? I confess this would not accord with any usage that I have been accustomed to observe. And in view of it I am constrained to attach as little importance to the argument from “common parlance,” as to the argument from the practice of the heathen.

These are the only arguments which I find in your letter to justify the practice of diluting wine; or rather the only difficulties which you have been pleased to propound for me to dispose of. I take it for granted you mean by the questions you have put to me, virtually to assert the opinion that the wine used in the Lord’s Supper *was* diluted. I cannot but think, my dear Sir, that it yet devolves upon you to *prove* it.

There is not an intimation in the Bible that this was the case; and the arguments you have already advanced, are, I am sure, to say the least, altogether inconclusive. Pardon me then for saying to you on this subject as you have said to me in regard to fermented wine;—that it is “a question on which we expect you to throw more light; for more is needed.”

But I will not dismiss this subject here. You shall have my reasons for believing that the wine used in the original institution of the supper was *not* diluted, and that it *ought not* to be diluted at the present day.

1. *There is not the least intimation in scripture that the wine used in the temple service, and by the priests, was diluted.* If it was right to use it undiluted for sacred purposes under the *Jewish* dispensation, can it be wrong to use it in a similar manner, and for similar purposes, under the *Christian* dispensation? If it was *actually* used undiluted in the former case, is it not reasonable to presume, unless there is some evidence to the contrary, that it was originally used in the same way, in the latter? If our Saviour had made a change, and especially if he had considered that change important, would he not have distinctly marked it, so that the church might be effectually guarded against mistake?

2. *In the only instance which I have been able to find in the scriptures in which the mixing of wine with water occurs, it is spoken of as a judgment.* “Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water.” (Isaiah i. 22.) Is it likely that Jesus Christ would have enjoined that as part of one of his own ordinances, which God had inflicted as a judgment upon a guilty nation, and which is not even mentioned in scripture in any other connexion?

3. *The example of the Corinthians* is as much to my purpose in this case as in the other. You expressly say in your Essay, "It is highly probable they drank undiluted wine, for intoxication could scarcely be produced in most persons by drinking ancient wine diluted by half or two-thirds water." If it is highly probable that *they* drank undiluted wine, then I maintain that, as they received the ordinance from the Apostle who had received it "from the Lord" himself, it is reasonable to conclude that undiluted wine was used at its original institution. And besides, on any other principle, the failure of the Apostle to rebuke them for having profaned the ordinance by using an improper element becomes utterly unaccountable. It supposes, as in the other case, that he undertook to reprove them, and actually did reprove them with some degree of severity, and yet did not even allude to that which primarily constituted their offence.

4. I derive an argument under this head also from *the history of the church*. I am well aware,—and I think I have alluded to the fact in my sermon,—that a sect arose before the close of the second century, who contended for diluting wine at the communion. But what else is this than evidence that it was originally drank undiluted? What gives the authority of the early ages its importance in these matters, is their nearness to the period of the introduction of Christianity; and the nearer we can trace any practice to the time of the Apostles, provided we cannot fix its date, other things being equal, the greater the probability that it was actually an apostolic practice. But if we are able distinctly to date the origin of any custom at a period subsequent to the apostolic times, it were absurd to

claim for it any divine authority on the ground that it arose only in the second century; for a real corruption in the second century is no better than the same corruption in the nineteenth. I say then that the fact that the second century is appealed to on this subject shows that the first cannot be; for as the authority of the first is better than that of the second, so no man would be satisfied to stop at the latter, who was not conscious that the former was against him.

5. *The nature of the ordinance* furnishes another argument in my favor. It is not designed as a repast for the purpose of sustenance, but as a ceremony for religious instruction. Wine, as used in this service, is merely a symbol of the blood of Christ, shed for the sins of men; and of course the smallest quantity of it is sufficient to answer the end of the institution. If it had been designed that it should be used on this occasion as in a common meal, for the sake of quenching thirst or gratifying appetite, there might have been some show of reason in its being diluted, with a view to prevent intoxication. The Corinthians indeed actually fell into this error; but I am not aware that the history of the christian church furnishes another example of it.

6. If the wine in the sacramental supper is to be diluted, *who shall prescribe the measure?* One individual may be satisfied with having half water; another may require three-fourths; another five-sixths; and another still perhaps may think that the cause of Temperance requires that the smallest possible quantity of wine should be used, and that a drop of wine to a gallon of water will fairly come up to the spirit of the Master's injunction; while yet another, more scrupulous for the

cause of Temperance, and less scrupulous for the authority of Christ, than the preceding, concludes that that single drop stands too much in the way of Temperance, and is of too little importance to the sacrament, to be retained ; and behold he comes out for pure water. Now I ask whether, if the principle be admitted that we must not drink wine at the communion table without diluting it, so long as there is no standard given by which the mixture is to be regulated, the church is not almost of course to be involved in an endless controversy? Admitting even the lawfulness of diluting it,—a point which I am by no means prepared to concede,—would not the dissensions which it would occasion in the church, far more than counterbalance any advantage which it could be supposed to secure to the cause of temperance?

Before I pass to your next class of interrogatories, allow me to suggest a query whether there is not some slight inconsistency in your proposing to me one set of questions, which would seem to imply at least a doubt on your part whether *fermented* wine was to be used in the communion, and forthwith following them by another set, which plainly imply that you are an advocate for *diluted* wine on that occasion? If I understand the matter, these are two distinct theories, which cannot with any show of reason both find an advocate in the same person: For the only reason that I have ever heard given for diluting the wine is to lessen its intoxicating power; but the unfermented juice of the grape has no intoxicating power, and therefore there can be no occasion for diluting it. It seems to me, therefore, if you go for the unfermented juice of the grape, as your former series of questions would seem to imply,

you must give up the diluting theory ; if you declare in favor of diluting, then I submit it to you whether the unfermented theory, does not become at once useless and ridiculous. It seems to me that you are bound in consistency to abandon the one or the other ; and yet I cannot resist the impression that you are holding on a little upon both, as if you were not yet quite certain at which point the light would be the strongest.

But I come back to your interrogatories. You say, "The bread which our Saviour brake, was surely *unleavened*. No other was in existence among the Jews on the passover day. How do you justify the use of *leavened* bread at our sacramental table ?"

I justify it on the ground that *the use of unleavened bread belonged peculiarly to the Jewish economy ; and as that dispensation has passed away, this, among other of its peculiarities, has passed away with it.* You remember that the question how far the Gentile converts were bound to Jewish observances, once actually came up, and was referred for decision to an apostolic council. And the decision was that they were bound to observe nothing, even then, except what was enjoined in the letter from Jerusalem, which contained no allusion to unleavened bread. It cannot reasonably be questioned that the Corinthian church, in celebrating the ordinance, used the bread which was in common use among them ; and as Corinth was a Gentile city, it was of course leavened bread. Is there nothing in this to "justify the use of" the same "at our sacramental table?"

You go on to remark, "We do not know whether the bread employed by Christ and his disciples was *wheat, or barley, or millet, or spelt.* Yet the Saviour says, '*This do in remembrance of me.*' Note the

“ word **THIS**. Reasoning as you do, now, I am not
 “ able to see why the *letter* of this command is not to
 “ be taken ; nor what authority you find for adminis-
 “ tering the Lord’s supper any where but in an upper
 “ chamber, at night, the guests lying down around a
 “ *triclinium*, the dress and wine and furniture and
 “ bread in all respects the same as originally ; in a
 “ word, *this* is to be *literally* construed, and literally
 “ complied with. To depart from such an obedience
 “ in any one respect, is to give up the principle in ques-
 “ tion.”

I utterly deny that any position taken in my sermon even remotely implies an obligation on our part to a literal imitation of our Saviour and his disciples, in respect to all the minute circumstances which attended the first celebration of the supper. For what is the great point which it is the design of the sermon to establish? Is it that Port wine, or Madeira wine, or some other particular kind of wine in distinction from all others, is essential to the validity of the ordinance? No such thing:—if it had been, I might undoubtedly have been called upon, and with some reason, to show whether the bread which was employed was made of wheat, or barley, or millet, or spelt. But the position of the sermon is, that *wine* was originally used in the supper, and that it ought therefore to be used still; without attempting to decide any thing in respect to the kind of wine, other than it should be “the fruit of the vine.” Now all that this position requires me to prove in respect to the other element, is, that it should be bread;—the kind of bread, if you please, that happens to be in use in the country where the ordinance is celebrated. It seems to me, my dear Sir, that your

remarks go to annihilate the distinction between the essential and accidental properties of the institution. You call upon me especially to note the word **THIS**—“*This* do in remembrance of me;”—as if the word *this* necessarily implied that, upon my principle, all the particular circumstances which you have enumerated as peculiar to the first celebration of the ordinance must be observed now. But read the next verse, (1. Cor. xi. 26) and you will there find that our Saviour himself has settled the meaning of *this*, past all contradiction. Immediately after saying “*This* do ye, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me;” he adds, “For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” The design of the institution, as our Saviour himself expresses it, is “to show the Lord’s death till he come.” The essential things belonging to it, are indicated by the words “eat this bread and drink this cup;” while not a word is here said of the “upper room,” or the “triclinium,” or any other of the unessential particulars which you enumerate. Drinking the cup, as every one knows, is a figurative expression for drinking what the cup contains; and that it contained wine in this case *you* admit; while the particular kind of wine which it contained, in distinction from all others, *I* have not been so “over-wise” as to attempt to designate. It seems to me then that Christ himself has distinguished as clearly as possible, between what belongs *essentially*, and what belongs *accidentally* to this service; and that he has made *such* a distinction as to justify to the letter the position I have taken in my sermon.

I must beg leave to quote one more paragraph from your letter;—a paragraph which I confess I have read

with more surprise than any thing else which the letter contains. It is as follows:—"I must beg you to re-
 " view one awful clause in your sermon. It is this :
 " 'I say unhesitatingly, Perish the hand,—no matter
 " what hand it may be,—that would profanely with-
 " draw from the supper either of the memorials of my
 " Redeemer's death!' I am well aware how many
 " things can be said to whittle away the force of such
 " a declaration. But I am also aware that they are
 " *subsequent* expedients; subterfuges resorted to in
 " order to save one from the consequences of what he
 " rashly uttered in a moment of passionate feeling, or
 " a paroxysm of polemic zeal. The plain unvarnished
 " English of the above malediction is 'Let all who
 " differ from me, and who maintain that the Lord's
 " supper may be celebrated without the elements of
 " bread and wine as they exist among us, or with di-
 " luted instead of undiluted wine—let all such perish!'
 " That is, let all who presume to differ from you, in-
 " cur the wrath and curse of Almighty God! Stand-
 " ing in the connexion that your words do, I can con-
 " strue them in no other way; and I shudder to give
 " them such a meaning. It is, I verily believe, a fair
 " construction of them; and I beseech you to look at
 " them with serious contemplation of their nature and
 " tendency. I know you will extenuate and parry, as
 " to this part of the subject; but I appeal to all candid
 " men whether your words are fairly capable of any
 " other construction."

I certainly am not disposed to doubt that you sup-
 posed you had given "a fair construction" to my
 words; and I do not marvel that you should have
 "shuddered to give them such a meaning:" my chief

wonder is that any one, and especially one who is officially an interpreter of language, could have found such a meaning in them. If the expression had *admitted* of such a construction, I should have supposed that your accustomed candour would have led you to apply the most charitable principles of interpretation, and even to strain a point a little, rather than find me guilty of such a shocking imprecation,—an imprecation which must put me at once upon the list of the profane and the heaven-daring. But they do *not* admit of such a construction; and as you have not attempted to show *how* they admit of it, or rather require it, I shall at present simply oppose my *ipse dixit* to yours; with this single remark that of the great number of individuals, learned and unlearned, whom I have heard speak of it, there has not been one but has marvelled at the injustice you have done me. I cannot forbear to add that the apprehension which you express that I shall “extenuate and parry as to this part of the subject,” indicates to me a lurking distrust after all of your own interpretation of my language; and that you would have been better satisfied in stating it, if you had been more certain that it was correct. I am quite willing to leave the expression, strong as it may seem to be, to the tribunal to which you have yourself appealed; but I frankly confess that I complain of you for having suggested to those who may be more than willing to admit it, but who would themselves never have thought of it, so unreasonable and injurious a construction.

I have now, my dear Sir, taken up every point suggested by your letter, and answered, according to my ability, the various questions you have propounded to

me. And having done it, permit me to say that I consider myself as having performed an entirely gratuitous service ;—a service to which the position I sustain on this subject in no wise obligated me. The ground taken in my sermon is, that the uniform practice of the church as it now exists, and as it has existed for ages, is right ; if *you* say that it is *not* right, then surely it behooves you to prove that it is not,—not to call upon me to prove that it is. The presumption from long existing usage is, that it *is* right ; and until you have furnished evidence to the contrary, I can see no reason why the church may not be at rest in respect to it. The present Reformers on this subject are evidently agreed upon nothing but that *some* change shall be made : for while some go for the *unfermented*, and some for the *diluted*, there are not wanting those who think that the *pure water system* is better than either. If then these men cannot agree as to the nature of the change that is to be made, nay if they not only contradict each other, but in some instances, contradict themselves also, is it not most unreasonable that we should be challenged to establish the correctness of our principles ? Why wish to demolish the foundations of many generations, unless you have something *better*, at least unless you have *something*, to substitute in their place ?

I will detain you with but one more remark. In reading your letter, and other recent communications which have been made to the public on the same subject, I have been struck with the fact, that there seems to be a *virtual acknowledgement of a principle on which Infidelity cannot fail to thrive*. You well know how the opposers of revealed religion have triumphed in the alleged contrariety between certain *physical* facts

which natural science, especially the department of Geology, has brought to light, and the Mosaic account of the creation ; though there is no reason to doubt that natural science is destined, in her progress towards perfection, completely to correct the error which, in her infancy, she had seemed to originate. Now I ask whether Christians, in endeavoring to sustain this new theory in respect to the Lord's supper, are not unwittingly arraying certain *moral* facts or supposed facts, against the Bible ; and thus supplying infidels with a weapon with which to make a deadly thrust at Christianity herself. It is boldly asserted in defence of the new doctrine, that the least particle of alcohol,—no matter in what form it exists,—is injurious to the constitution of man. But from whom did man receive his constitution but from God ? If then God has permitted, and on some occasions even required, the use of wine, what does this prove but that God is either ignorant of the constitution of his own creature,—the work of his own hands, or else that he has commanded the use of that which he foresaw must injure him ? That God has actually permitted and required this, *you* surely will not question, if the Bible be acknowledged as a Divine Revelation. Here the infidel stands ready to complete the argument by saying that God cannot act contrary to his own perfections ; and therefore the Bible has no claim to be considered as bearing the stamp of his authority. Is it not, to say the least, a sad mistake that, in our zeal to advance any good cause, we should virtually yield the best of all causes—the cause of our blessed Christianity—to the tender mercies of its enemies ?

Wishing you the light and guidance of God's gracious Spirit, in all your efforts to ascertain and exhibit the truth,

I am, my dear Sir,

With sincere regard and affection,

Your friend and brother,

W. B. SPRAGUE.

Albany, Aug. 22, 1835.