

Lecture LVII
on
Proverbs 20:1

by
Ralph Wardlaw

*"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging;
and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."*

It is now nearly five years since, in illustrating the "fruits of the Spirit" enumerated by Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, I called your attention, in three discourses, to the subject of *temperance*. It is by no means my purpose to enter into the subject at so much length at present or to attempt anything like what might be called a full discussion--either of the claims of the *total abstinence system* or of the merits, on the one side or the other--of what has now been technically denominated the *wine question*. All that I intend is, as briefly and as simply as I can, to collect upon two or three points the lights of Scripture; and to do this in such a manner as to show that even to ordinary readers of the Bible there is no difficulty in the matter, if they will only bring to the inquiry the principles of sound and unprejudiced common sense.

The text brings before us three things:

1. *Certain articles*--"*Wine and strong drink*."
2. *Certain tendencies* ascribed to them--"*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging*."
3. The *folly of yielding* to these tendencies--"*Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*."

1. We have *two articles*--"*Wine and strong drink*." And since the introduction of recent discussions on the abstinence question, the English reader has gotten so familiar with the original Hebrew terms that it has ceased to be pedantry [undue display of learning] and has become almost necessary to use them. The word for wine is *yayin*; the word for strong drink *shekhar*. In not a few of the publications on the subject we have page after page bedazzled [showily displayed] with the characters of Hebrew and Chaldee, and Arabic, and Syriac, and Greek--and with the words of these various languages in English letters. We have, at the same time, minute and multiform descriptions of the various processes to which, in ancient times and countries, the juice of the grape was subjected, of the different articles produced by these processes, and the several modes in which they were respectively used.

All this possesses a certain description of interest. It is gratifying to the curiosity both of the critic and the etymologist, of the naturalist, the chemist, and the man of general information. But considered as bearing on the answer to the question, What, in Scripture language, is meant by "*wine*" and "*strong drink*" (especially the former), it does appear to me to be to a great extent *a waste of learning*. What is a plain man to make of his Bible if on so seemingly simple a subject as the use and abuse of intoxicating drinks he finds himself wrapped in a cloud of learned dust about the very meaning of the words in which his duty and his danger are pointed out to him?

Further, how useful and desirable soever it may be to trace terms to their etymological origin, it should not be forgotten that even the clearest ascertainment of this is very far from

being a sure and satisfactory way of determining the *meaning* of a word--that [ascertaining] depending so much on particular associations at the time when the term is specifically applied and varying greatly in the progress of every language. It is by *usage alone*--and usage undergoing changes far from slight at times, in the history of the language--that the *true sense* of any term can be ascertained.

There are different words employed in the Old Testament to express, under various modifications, beverages or preparations from the vine. By some *seven* are enumerated; by others even *nine* or *ten*. One of them is the *second* of those in our text--the *shekhar*. This word, however, is more general, meaning "strong drink" of any description, whether the material from which it is made be the fruit of the vine or any other substance; and respecting the import of *it*, as always used for what is intoxicating, there is no dispute. Setting it, therefore, in the meanwhile aside, there are of all the rest *two only* which on the present question call for any remark. They are the former of the two words in my text, *yayin*, and the word *tirosh*.

Yayin is supposed to be derived from the verb which signifies to *squeeze* or *press*, an etymology natural and simple--this being the process by which the juice, which is the material of the wine, is obtained from the fruit.

Of *tirosh* different etymologies are given: the one, from the verb signifying to *possess* or *take full possession*--by which its influence on the man who freely uses it is conceived to be strongly conveyed; it takes possession of him so that he is no longer himself or under his own control. It has been thought, indeed, that from this etymology *tirosh* may simply mean *vineyards*, considered as the symbol (by a part for the whole) of a man's *possessions*, *property*, or *inheritance*. But this won't do. *Tirosh*, beyond all question, means a particular *drink*. This is its ordinary import. And men do not drink their vineyards any more than they eat their lands.

Another derivation of the word is from the term signifying *head*. And if this were the true etymology, it would seem to me much more likely that the association by which it was suggested was still the *influence* of the liquor--its *headiness*, its effect in unsettling the understanding--than any resemblance between the *head* and the *berry* or *cluster*. But as I have said, it is not etymology but *usage* that must settle the question. Etymology seems to favor the intoxicating properties of the *tirosh* as well as of the *yayin*. In considering the question of *usage*, I begin with the latter.

Yayin is the word in our text, and there can be no doubt of its intoxicating character in *this* occurrence of it. It is, I may say, *the* word for *wine* in the Old Testament Scriptures. The word for the same thing in the Greek, the Latin, the German, the Dutch, the English, and other European languages is a derivative from it--or rather is very same term appropriately varied. It occurs about one hundred and forty times in the Hebrew Bible. And it denotes, almost *invariably*, the *fermented juice of the grape*; and of course an intoxicating beverage when taken in excess.

I have said "almost invariably." I might suppress the qualifying *almost*; for the alleged *exceptions* are on no legitimate principle of criticism to be regarded as such. They are Isa. 16:10; Jer. 48:33: "Gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread

out no *wine* in their presses; I have made their vintage-shouting to cease." "Joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused *wine* to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting."

To say that in such passages the *yayin* signifies the *grape-juice* while in the process of expression is incorrect, proceeding on a principle of strict literality which cannot be admitted. It clearly means the wine anticipated as the result of the process, on a principle universal in language. The gardeners and vinedressers of Germany are said to call their *grapes in the cluster*, at this day, *their wine*. A principle of interpretation so literal would yield curious results: such as that the Israelites fed on corn without its being baked into bread, because Jehovah says, "I should have fed them with the *finest of the wheat*"; and that the *manna* was, in like manner, eaten as it fell without any culinary process, because it is called *bread*--God promising to "rain *bread* from heaven" upon them.

Yayin, then, (the proper word for *wine*,) signified *fermented* or *intoxicating* wine. Yet observe--

This is the wine that was used in the *ordinances of ancient ceremonial worship*. It was the *drink-offering* which was enjoined to be presented, in various quantities, with the animal sacrifices. It is invariably--and you are aware how frequent the ceremony was--the *yayin*. Observe further--

This *yayin* is on various occasions *promised as a divine bestowment and blessing*, and the *deprivation of it*, on the other hand, *threatened as a judicial calamity*. It is true that the word *tirosh* is also used, and it may be even more frequently in similar connections. What of that? It is enough that *both* are used without discrimination when the blessing is promised and when the judgment is denounced.¹ Again,

In various instances, when God is giving promises of blessing, *both* words are used in association with *corn and oil*, and other articles of sustenance whether of necessity or of comfort. It is not the *tirosh* only that is thus associated and thus promised. The *yayin* is in the same predicament. It is, therefore, a point of fact about which there can be no reasonable doubt, that God promises as a *good*, as a *blessing*, that which possessed *intoxicating qualities*. The reason and principle are very plain. He promises that of which the *use* (for which alone it was given) was a benefit, but of which the *abuse* (which was the result not of God's goodness but of man's perversion of it) was prejudicial. How few gifts of God are there of which on one ground or another the same thing might not be said? Again,

The law of the Nazarite laid him under an interdict [prohibition] during the period of his vow as to the use of wine, and of whatever came of the vine. But whenever his vow ceased, the same authority gave him liberty to take wine. The restriction neither existed before nor after the time of his vow. Mark too the permission given in certain specified circumstances when any Jews resided at a distance from Jerusalem (Deut. 14:24-26). And mark also the more than permission (as indeed the language referred to also was), the encouraging direction given to the pious Israelite when he complied with divine counsels under the influence of principles and motives that were well-pleasing in God's sight: "Go thy way, eat

¹ I refer for the use of *yayin*, in such connections, to Gen. 49:11,12; Psalm 104:15; Hos. 14:7; Amos 9:14; and Deut. 28:39.

thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts thy works" (Eccles. 9:7).

There is no proof whatever that the *tirosh* was not intoxicating when used to excess, as well as the *yayin*. We have seen that the etymology rather *favours* its having been so. And as to the effects actually ascribed to it, one passage alone, were there no other, should be enough to satisfy every unprejudiced mind: "Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart" (Hos. 4:11). The "*new wine*" here is *tirosh*. And I can imagine nothing more unworthy of all candor, more an outrage on all fair and honorable criticism, than the attempt to show that in such a connection *tirosh* may mean no more than the luxury of *syrup of grapes and water*--the harmless refreshment of a summer's day! As if we were to say, when denouncing the vicious causes of alienation from God and moral destruction, "Whoredom, and strong drink, and *lemonade!*" The truth is, if any distinction is to be made between the *yayin* and the *tirosh*--the "*wine*" and the "*new wine*"--in such a passage, we must proceed on the principle of *climax*, and consider the latter as the stronger of the two!

The *yayin* was also a common beverage in use by the best of men. It was *this* that Melchisedec the king of Salem brought out to Abraham on his return from the slaughter of the kings. And on various occasions "bottles" or *skinfuls* "of wine"--of *yayin*--form a part of the supplies provided for the sustenance and refreshment of those standing in need of such supplies when hungry, athirst, and weary.

The example of the *Rechabites* is a favorite one with our total abstinence brethren, and some of them have even adopted the designation--with what propriety, a glance at the case is enough to show.² It is not at all, you will observe, their *abstinence from wine* that is the subject of the divine commendation. We are not even certain whether Jonadab their father was justifiable in laying them under this interdict or not. The ground of commendation is simply their *obedience to their father*, which Jehovah justly and pointedly sets in contrast with the ungrateful and unnatural rebellion of His people. And further, why do not the admirers and professed imitators of the Rechabites *dwell in tents* as well as abstain from wine? There is the very same ground for the one as there is for the other.

It seems to me, then, an utterly vain attempt to make it out that the *wine* of the Old Testament, under whichever designation mentioned, was without intoxicating properties. The question is not at all whether other articles were prepared from grapes and were in common use. This is granted. That the Hebrews, like certain other peoples, were in the practice of boiling down the juice of grapes to one-third or one-half its quantity and bringing it to the consistence of a syrup, who cares to question? Be it so. Two things require to be noticed: first, that in no passage of the Old Testament scriptures do we ever find any allusion whatever to any such practice, or to the use of such syrup as a beverage; and secondly, that this *syrup and water*, supposing it in use, was no more the liquor called in the Old Testament *wine* than *molasses and water* would in the West Indies be the liquor called *rum*.

It is at once and freely admitted that the ordinary wines of Palestine were not *so* intoxicating as the brandied wines of Europe. What is contended for is simply the point of fact that they were intoxicating. And no reader of the scriptures of the Old Testament who observes with what frequency *wine* and *drunkenness* are there associated--and how often the *wine* stands

² Jer. 35:1-10.

in union and, as it were, identification with *strong drink* in the production [blossoming] (by its abuse) of this monstrous evil of inebriation--can be at any loss as to the conclusion to which he should come.

It will not do, first, to fill ourselves with a horror of the *thing itself* on account of the abuse of it, and thence to conclude that such a thing *could not possibly* be promised and bestowed as a blessing, and then to set to work an ingenuity of which the principle and motive may be good but of which the ultimate tendency is most mischievous--to strain words and force distinctions [in order] to bring the meaning into harmony with our previous conceptions. Our proper business is to take facts as they stand plainly before us. And if these facts cannot be made to harmonize with certain principles which we have adopted respecting good and evil and the conduct becoming the divine Being, to rest assured that in these principles there is an error. The facts should correct the judgment.

I come now to the language of the New Testament. I might almost say there is there but *one word for wine*. It is just the Hebrew word *Græcised* [translated into Greek]. In one instance that word is accompanied with the epithet *unmixed*; where the epithet evidently means *undiluted*--in all its strength. It is where the wine is the emblem of divine wrath: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" (Rev. 14:10). In only two instances does *another designation* for *wine itself* occur. The first: "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13). In this passage *new wine* is not the literal nor proper rendering. It should be "*sweet wine*," there being then as now differences in the mode of preparation by which some of the wines were rendered sweet and others not. At that time of the year there could not be had what is properly termed "*new wine*." It is thought to have been a strong sweet spiced wine--with honey and pepper. The only other exception from the use of the common Greek word for wine is in the institution of the Lord's Supper, where Jesus calls it "*the fruit*," or *produce of the vine*." I call it *one* instance of exception because, although it occurs in three of the evangelists, it is only the record by three historians of what was but *once said*.

The question then is: What is the meaning of this word, not etymologically, but according to its *actual use* in the inspired narrative? There is a passage which brings us directly to this point: "No man puts new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desires new; for he says, The old is better" (Luke 5:37-39).

I need not say this is *fermented wine*. It will not do to say that the putting of it into new and strong skins was to *prevent fermentation*. There *is* fermentation; and it is the strong working of the fermentation that renders new bottles necessary to prevent the loss of both bottles and wine. If anything further were needed in proof of this, it is to be found in the thirty-ninth verse: inasmuch as *old unfermented* must, or wine, could *never be better* than *new*. It is only of *fermented* wine that the saying could be true. The *newer* and *sweeter* the must, the better, if it is *unfermented*.

To those who know their New Testament, I need not say that its οἶνος -- its *wine* -- is ever represented as possessing inebriating properties.³ In the character of *bishops and deacons*,

³ Compare, for example, Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3.

mark this particular feature: "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre" (1 Tim. 3:3, 8). And, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre" (Tit. 1:7). Most assuredly, their not being *given to wine*, not *given to much wine*, does not mean that they should not use it *at all*. The expressions *imply* the use while they interdict the excess. Compare it with another feature of the same character in the passages just quoted--that they should not be "given to filthy lucre," "greedy of filthy lucre" (the same word in the original). This does not mean that they never should touch money. So is it with the wine. *Moderation* in regard to both is the spirit of the injunctions: in opposition, in the one case, to covetousness, or that "love of money which is the root of all evil"; and in the other, to inebriety and the disturbance of reason, or unnecessary waste.

We are entitled to take what our Lord says of wine in the passage before quoted as the *key* to all the occurrences of wine in the New Testament. We have seen that the key fits in regard to those already referred to. Let us look to another. It relates to the *character of Jesus himself*: "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He has a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But Wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:33-35).

Here observe *first*, there is a contrast between the character of John and the character of Jesus. John was a recluse. He retired from society and frequented the solitudes of the wilderness, living a life of abstinence from the social gratifications of human intercourse; whereas Jesus went about among his countrymen, ate and drank with them, and on such occasions as he knew would prove suitable for his own gracious purposes, accepted invitations to be a guest at their tables. In the course pursued by John, he acted in accordance with the charges which had, by the angel of God, been given concerning him before his birth: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

Secondly, no one will question the perfect rectitude of the character of Jesus. He conformed to ordinary practice in whatever could be done without sin. It follows, therefore, that there was *no sin in drinking wine*--no more than in *eating bread* (the two things being mentioned together in the very same manner). The only question must regard the *nature of the wine* of which he partook.

This leads me to notice, *thirdly*, that while (even were there no further proof) we are entitled to understand it of the wine spoken of by the same name in other parts of the New Testament (which we have seen was the ordinary fermented wine), we *have* further evidence. It is in this very passage. It is in the fact of his having been slandered as a "*wine bibber*." That this *was* a vile slander we of course assume. It was the misrepresentation of base malignity, the construction of what was perfectly innocent into a charge of evil. But if the wine in ordinary use had not been of an inebriating character, it would *not* have been such a charge. Had it been true that the wine was of such a quality that a man might drink it as freely and copiously without harm as he might of "the water of the Ganges," then the designation of a wine-bibber would no more have been a reproach than that of a *water-*

bibber.

The fact, however, of his having conformed to ordinary practice in the use, not the abuse, of this divinely provided beverage is to all Christians sufficient proof that there is no sin in it; that *all* use not abuse. And they who employ strong and unqualified terms of reprobation of the use of wine--pronouncing water "the best and *only* drink without question which nature designed for man," and exclaiming (in the spirit of indignant renunciation of anything stronger) "give me the pure water which the Saviour enjoyed at the well of Jacob,"--would do well to take heed that they be not in effect bringing afresh against that Saviour the old slander. They surely forget themselves. While they thus extol water as the only beverage which nature has provided, and which the God of nature (by so providing it) sanctions, they may well blush at the recollection that the wine as well as the water was the drink of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Let them think *on whom* their charges and their taunts alight!

Let us now go to Cana of Galilee. You are all familiar with the facts of the "marriage in Cana of Galilee," with the innocent festivities of that occasion and the manner in which Jesus supplied the deficiency in the means of maintaining them. These feasts, as we learn from Old Testament history, were kept up for seven successive days. It is not unlikely that a larger number of guests had, on this occasion, come than had been expected. At what time of the feast we cannot say, but the company ran short of wine. And by an act of miraculous power Jesus furnished a supply which from its extent--even on the most moderate computation--is conceived by many to have been intended to go beyond the limits of the feast and to form a temporary stock for the newly-married pair.

Now here, as in a former case, there is a common way of *begging the question*. From the character of the Saviour it is at once inferred (with, I do not call it an affected but a sincere and well-meant horror at the very supposition of the contrary) that the wine thus produced could not possibly be wine with inebriating qualities. But this is far from being the fair way to take up such a case. It is assuming what can never be granted: that to make for legitimate use an article that was liable to abuse--even although in the particular case there was no abuse of any kind--would have been inconsistent with our Lord's character. The question is still one of *fact*. And if we can ascertain the fact, we should humbly conclude that it was in harmony with the Saviour's character, and the imitation of it not to be hastily and harshly condemned in the disciples of that Saviour.

Look, then, at the case. *First*, we are quite sure (thus much may with confidence be certainly inferred from the character of our Lord) that there was not on the occasion at which he was present, I do not say *intoxication*, but any approach to inebriety or indecorum. To nothing of the kind, we may be assured, would He by his presence have given countenance or the remotest appearance of sanction. And observe [that] the very language of "the ruler of the feast" respecting "the water that was made wine" shows that with regard to *him*, at least, there was at the time the perfect retention of his discriminating taste. And we have no reason to imagine that there was one in the company of whom the same thing was not true; for, *secondly*, this same language of "the ruler of the feast" clearly refers *not* to what had at the time taken place, but only to what was *customary* on similar occasions among the men of the world. And then, *thirdly*, mark what he says: "Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

It will not be disputed that the designation "*good wine*" means, in both of its occurrences, wine possessing the same qualities in a similar or superior degree. Now it is very evident that the setting forth of the inferior wine "*after men have well drunk*" is to be explained from the inebriating quality of the "good wine" having begun to be so far experienced as to impair that delicacy of taste, and that particular attention to what they were drinking, and so to prevent the change from being observed. "The *good wine*," therefore, spoken of as usually produced at the beginning of a feast was fermented, inebriating wine. And if so, "the *good wine*" now produced by the Saviour must have been of the same description.

If any man shudders at this, he shudders at a shadow, at a phantom of his own imagination. He is weak enough to forget the distinction between *use* and *abuse*, between wine as given by God to "make glad the heart of man" and wine as taken in the excesses of sensuality and to the unsettling of sober reason. The man who feel thus should not be able to bear the sight of *money*, seeing nothing can be worse in its results than that which is "the root of all evil." And yet "money answers all things"--good ends as well as bad. The evils arise from its abuse, whether in the excess of the desire after it or in the extravagance, the meanness, or the turpitude [depravity] of its application.

All that can be concluded from the incident as recorded is that our divine Lord graced and honored and blessed with his personal presence the innocent festivities of a connubial party, probably within the circle of his mother's kindred; and that He supplied to the full, by miracle, the means of its enjoyment. This is enough. Had such a thing been wrong in himself, Jesus never would have done it. Had such a thing been wrong in his followers, He never would have given them the countenance of his example, or his countenance in any way in the doing of it.

There is no light in which the strong language that has been used against the use of wine, or of anything that can intoxicate, has shocked and grieved me more than when I regard it in its bearing upon the character and conduct of my Lord and Master. I take the most lenient and charitable view in my power when I impute to inconsideration and to hasty zeal for a favorite cause the terms of unmeasured and indiscriminating censure with which some good men have condemned the use, and especially the social use, of wine--their banishing it from their tables and from their houses; and their having brought themselves under a solemn pledge not to take, nor give, nor offer that which was taken, and given, and offered (and even miraculously created) for social use by Him whom they profess to regard as having in all things "left them an example, that they should follow his steps"!

Surely, surely, fellow-Christians who have taken such a position may well be startled at the presumption involved in it. It is matter of no light concern to occupy ground that, if just, reflects upon the conduct of the Christian's Lord, and sets the disciple "above his Master." This is a *transcendentalism* in morals at which I should feel it *impiety* to aim!

There is one other point to which, before closing, I must advert. (It was my wish and intention to have finished the whole subject in one discourse; but the second and third heads are of too great practical importance to be thrust into so narrow a corner as must remain when I have finished the first.⁴)

4 The reader will find parts 2 and 3 in Wardlaw's 2nd volume of *Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*.

The point to which I have alluded is the question as to *the wine used in the institution of the Lord's supper*. Much has of late been made of this question; a great deal more, in my apprehension, than its importance warrants. Why should it be at all necessary to ascertain the precise kind of wine any more than the precise kind of bread? The wine used was that used in the paschal solemnity, and doubtless this was the ordinary *yayin*, the fermented wine of the country.

Some indeed have fancied that the exclusion of *leaven* during that solemnity extended to *fermented* liquors as well as to the "leaven of bread." We have, however, pretty clear proof to the contrary in the fact that on the morrow after the passover the quarter-*hin* of *yayin*, or fermented wine, was to be the libation, or drink-offering with the enjoined sacrifice; and that the *hin* of the same wine was to be offered day by day as usual during the days of unleavened bread as at other times. And if it was the ordinary wine of the country, should not that which *we* use be the same [the ordinary wine of our country]? We properly conform to the custom of the [our] country in other particulars. We *sit* because it is our ordinary posture at table, without ever deeming it necessary to conform to theirs, which was *reclining*. We observe our Sabbath from morning to morning instead of from evening to evening, because the mode or reckoning the day differs with us from what it was with them. Why, then, any scruple about the use of whatever is the ordinary wine of the country?

But I shall be told, it is *not called wine at all*. It is "*the fruit of the vine*." I feel it difficult to fancy those in earnest who gravely found anything on this. If "*the fruit of the vine*" is to be taken literally, it must be the fruit which the vine bears--that is, *grapes*. We are very sure, however, that it was not *grapes* that were the contents of the paschal cup, and consequently of the cup used in the institution of the Lord's supper. What then (considering the fruit of the vine as signifying more generally the *produce* of the vine) *was it*? One or other of *three* things: [1] *fresh must--the newly expressed juice of the grape*; [2] the *inspissated* [thickened by means of evaporation] *syrup of grape juice, diluted with water*; or [3] *fermented wine*.

The *first* it could not be, for this reason: that the time of the year when the passover was celebrated was [a] full five months after the last vintage of the preceding year, so that fresh must, or grape-juice, was out of the question. There are some who, on this subject, seem to forget the seasons altogether and to have the notion that the fresh juice of the grape might be had at any time.

With regard to the *second*, our friends seem to forget another thing. They speak of the juice or blood of the grape *in its natural state*. But they should recollect that the inspissated syrup of grapes is *not* the juice in its natural state; that it is obtained by an artificial process, a process much more artificial than that of fermentation, namely, that of slow and repeated boilings by which it becomes a syrup but ceases to be the natural unaltered juice of the grape.

To the juice of the grape *fermentation* is, strictly and properly, a natural process. So soon and so unavoidably does this process begin that there appears to be hardly less evidence that grapes (the fruit of the vine as given by God to man) were *intended to ferment* for him, as that they were intended for him at all. They will ferment in spite of him. And since it is represented, when spoken of as God's gift in the same sense with bread, as "making glad the heart of man," and since it is as a fermented beverage that it especially possesses this cheering or exhilarating property, we seem warranted to regard its fermentation as in the

divine purpose in the bestowment of the boon.

From these considerations as well as from the whole tenor of the New Testament respecting wine, as in use among the Jews, we feel ourselves justified in concluding that the cup in the hands of the Saviour when he instituted the commemoration of his dying love contained nothing else than the *ordinary fermented wines of Judea*.

It arises from the cause before alluded to--a morbid horror (the result of undue attachment to a system) of all that is capable of producing intoxication how innocent soever in itself--that any man should ask the question (with a variety of questions of a similar description, still more strongly and antithetically put), "How could fermented wine, which so generally and so directly leads men into sin, be an emblem of that blood which was shed for the remission of sin?" [I answer:] "To the pure, all things are pure." There is nothing in fermented wine, in itself, evil; or in the use of it [that is] detrimental. The very reverse [is the case]. And why should *not* the two things in nature which are represented--the one as "*making glad* the heart of man" and the other as "*strengthening* man's heart"--be appropriate symbols in an ordinance of which the design is to commemorate the dying love of Him from whose atoning death we derive both our joy and our strength? It is by the remembrance of him--by musing on his person and his work, the freeness of his grace, the riches of his love--that our hearts are gladdened and we "go on our way rejoicing"; that our spiritual strength is renewed so that "going from strength to strength" we at length expect to "appear before God in the heavenly Zion!"

It is distressing to think of the lengths to which ultra views on this point are carrying individuals and churches. It is like a *mania*. I had a letter not long since from the pastor of a church in the South, in great perplexity in consequence of the scruples of some of his members about fermented wine in the supper, and consulting me whether it would be right to allow them, according to their desire, to follow the practice of the priest-ridden laity of the Romish Church and to *take the sacrament in one kind*, that is, partaking of the bread only! Members of churches, I believe, have handed the cup past them; some have withdrawn from communion; and in some, it is said, of the American churches, extraordinary substitutes have been resorted to!

And then with regard to *church membership*, the virtue which on this subject the Bible requires of Christians is "sobriety," "moderation," "*temperance*." There is no command that goes further than this; no injunction of *abstinence*. And all the commands being to temperance, and the very idea of temperance involving that of use, all the commands proceed upon the assumption of *use being lawful*. And this, we have seen, accords with the example which we are taught to look up to as the pattern of sinless excellence.

Who, then, is entitled to demand more as the condition, so far as this one department of duty is concerned, of fellowship in the church of Christ? Or how can the not requiring more ever form a legitimate ground for the withdrawal of any member from a church? Or how can any church be warrantably constituted on terms of communion that are not to be found in the Bible? It is a very just sentiment of a very sensible and judicious writer [Medhurst] on the subject of this morning's discourse: "To set up a standard of morality which God has not set up, and to forbid that which God has not forbidden, is not the way to ensure the blessing of the Almighty, or the cooperation of his servants; and we shall best promote the interests of the temperance cause by endeavoring to understand the Scripture argument on the

subject, and by confining our requisitions and prohibitions within the limits of Bible morality."

This is Lecture LVII in Ralph Wardlaw, *Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*, J. S. Wardlaw, gen. ed., vol. II, 2nd ed. (London: A. Fullarton & Co., 1869). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that punctuation and KJV-era pronouns and verb forms have been modernized and long paragraphs have been divided.