

Original Articles.

Abstinence, a Scriptural means of doing good

In our last, we argued the lawfulness of abstinence as a means of suppressing the vice of drunkenness, from the two following considerations, which contain all that is necessary to justify it. It is lawful in itself, and it is an effectual method of gaining the end in view. In the absence, therefore, of all prohibition to prevent us, we are not only at full liberty to adopt it, but we consider it is our duty to do so; and we have no alternative between adopting it, and laying ourselves open to the charge of being hostile or indifferent to the good which in this case it will be the means of accomplishing.

Those who object that this is an Infidel method of preventing sin, and give us to understand, at the same time, that their zeal for the Gospel will not allow them to adopt it, act a most inconsistent part. They ascribe to Infidelity the praise of all the good which it has effected; and that good, according to the Bishop of Chester, as will be seen in another column of this paper, is the following: "Temperance Societies have emptied the taverns and filled the churches." We say, they give Infidelity the praise of this, and at the same time represent the Gospel as opposed to it, and as requiring people to continue to drink as before. And this is defending the Gospel, and exposing Infidelity! If any of our readers can believe that the men who think and speak and print such things, are actuated by a sincere love of Evangelical truth, their charity must be of an extraordinary kind. To cast a reflection of the foulest kind upon the Gospel, and to give its rival Infidelity the highest praise, is a somewhat suspicious way of expressing our love of it.

We said that the abstinence which the Apostle Paul practised and enjoined is a farther vindication of the course which Temperance Societies pursue. Let us consider it.

1. Cor. viii. 13.—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Rom. xiv. 21.—"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

That the Apostle practised abstinence, at least wherever the evil assumed existed, cannot be doubted, after reading the first of these quotations; and it is equally evident from the second, that he enjoined it upon others; for though the words used amount only to a recommendation of abstinence, yet nobody needs to be told that in scripture a recommendation is equal to a command. The question then presents itself, what motive induced him to do so? This is a point on which many opinions are held opposite to the truth, and to one another. Some tell us that the use of the meat and drinks referred to in these passages was sinful in itself, but this is contrary to the express testimony of the Apostle—"Every creature of God is good"—"I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself." Some tell us again that many Christians thought the use of these things sinful, and would have been offended if the Apostle and others had used them, and that it was solely

to avoid giving them this offence, that such abstinence was enjoined. But this opinion is as groundless as the other. From the first of these passages quoted, it is evident that the Apostle abstained, not lest he should offend a brother, but "*lest he should make a brother to offend*," that is, lead him into sin.—The same thing is evident from the other passage in Romans. Abstinence is there enjoined, lest by the use of the things referred to, a brother should be made to stumble, or to offend,* or be made weak. The object, therefore, of the Apostle's abstinence was to prevent sin.

It had been the practice in the church of Corinth, "to eat those things which had been offered in sacrifice to idols." Christians who "had knowledge," that is, old converts, who had made considerable progress in Christian attainments, could do so without sin, "they knew that an idol was nothing in the world;" and, therefore, made no difference between the meat of the sacrifice and any other food. But younger converts, who "had not this knowledge," could not do so—their minds were still in some measure influenced by former prejudices and associations, and they still considered such food as more sacred than other food, because it had been offered on the idol's altar. Partaking of the sacrifice with such feelings they did homage to the idol, and were thus guilty of sin. The example of the older converts had a tendency to lead them into this sin. On this account their use of things offered in sacrifice to idols, though harmless, so far as they themselves were concerned, yet being harmful in its consequences upon others, was forbidden.

The same remarks may be applied in illustration of the other passage in the Romans, with this addition—the rule there laid down applies not only to things offered in sacrifice to idols, but likewise to the Jewish distinctions of meats, and in short, to "any thing" which, however harmless in itself, might lead another man into sin. There were many Jewish converts in the church of Rome—those who were "strong," that is old converts, who had made considerable progress in Christian knowledge, disregarded the Mosaic distinctions, and looked upon all kinds of food as alike, and could therefore use them indiscriminately without sin. But young converts, who were "weak," were still in some degree under the power of Jewish prejudices. In attempting, therefore, to follow the example of the older brethren by using food indiscriminately, they did violence to their conscience, and in this way committed sin, ver. 20, 23. The conduct, therefore, of the former, though harmless, so far as they themselves were concerned, had a tendency to lead others into sin; it was "putting a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in a brother's way," and was therefore forbidden.

Abstinence was therefore enjoined by the Apostle as a means of preventing sin, and this is a complete justification of Temperance Societies in using it for the same purpose.

(To be continued)

* For so the original signifies. The same word occurs twice in the other passage, 1. Cor. viii. 13, and is there correctly rendered "make to offend." Compare Macknight's translation in another page. See also, Mat. v. 29, 30—xviii. 6, 8, 9, &c. &c.

Brandy, Wine, and Beer.

The following story is true, though not obvious reasons we suppress proper notice:—

A respectable merchant in ———, no matter what village of Upper or Lower Canada, had two promising sons, to whose care he in a great measure confided his business. He dealt in ardent spirits as well as other things, and his eldest son contracted an appetite for brandy by tasting now and then in the store. This appetite of course grew stronger, till from being a help to his father he became a positive nuisance; and he is now, after various ineffectual efforts to retrieve him, and after causing his father to lose large sums in different ways, fast sinking into the drunkard's grave; having had several attacks of delirium tremens, he is a poor miserable outcast from every thing that is happy and respectable.

Bitterly did the father express his regret to his friends that he had ever dealt in such a destructive article as ardent spirits, and as the Temperance reformation was then beginning, he gave up that branch of business.

He, however, still kept wine, and his second son drank of it frequently, never dreaming that there was any harm in a glass of "sound old Port" or "mellow East India Madeira." Wine had, nevertheless, the same effect upon him that brandy had produced upon the elder brother; and after a career of dissipation, extravagance and intemperance, he is now dying of consumption.

The old man, losing all hope of assistance from his sons, retired from business, and in order to save his neighbors from similar misfortunes to those which he had experienced, he commenced a brewery, for the purpose, as he said, of providing a good, wholesome and nutritious substitute for the brandy, wine, &c., which ruined so many; and the old man is perfectly sincere in his praises of malt liquor, for he has been observed two or three times quite drunk upon the produce of his own brewery. And his friends have to lament that he is fast treading in the footsteps of his sons. If any one, however, undertakes to remonstrate with him, he stoutly defends his favorite beverage, and invariably concludes with a philippic against Temperance Societies for going too fast and too far.

Consequences of Abstinence and Consequences of Drinking contrasted.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"

Water Drinkers.

Extracted from a Speech of Mr. John Smith, delivered at a Temperance Meeting at Birmingham.

Even the old error of supposing that stimulating liquors were useful in strengthening the animal or mental powers, is fast dying away. The late member of Parliament for