



# The REFLECTOR

## The Sin of Drunkenness

E. CLAUDE GARDNER

For a number of years the Bible school quarterly published by the GOSPEL ADVOCATE carried a regular "temperance lesson." This was a good plan to keep us concerned with this menace. Perhaps it would be good to incorporate such teaching again since the alcoholic problem does not seem to diminish but rather to abound in great magnitude. When we read how the American people spend approximately ten billion dollars annually for alcohol, we become aware of our duty to alert Christians to the danger. As in the days of Solomon, "... strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." (Prov. 20: 1.)

### ATTEMPTS TO JUSTIFY DRINKING AND DRUNKENNESS

The consumers along with "drink sympathizers" constantly release propaganda via every means of communication. As in other propaganda, much which is given out for consumption may be accepted but it invariably contains a bit of poison fatal to the one who devours it. These explanations to condone alcoholism are commonly voiced by deluded, dishonest, and wicked men:

1. *Biblical.* Man is given to thinking that everything he does is right. In order to justify sottishness and other malpractices he often quotes the Bible. Defensively, he asks, does not the scripture say, "drink a little wine"? But the meaning is understood by reading the entire verse. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (1 Tim. 5: 23.) This is an elliptical statement. Paul does not forbid imbibing water, but he actually says: drink no longer water *only* but wine also. The purpose is medicinal—"for thy stomach's sake." The amount is a "little," not a barrel.

liquor on the grounds of the revenue received to replenish governmental treasuries. In one small Illinois town a few years ago, the wets plead for citizens to vote for liquor because of the income in taxes. In a large advertisement the headline read: "Can \_\_\_\_\_ afford to give up \$5,000 in revenue?" The town voted the tax. The parents are afraid for their children to go down the street alone near the taverns. Even though levies are secured, the government must spend more to protect its citizenry. Prohibition is often scored for being ineffective. Possibly this could be granted to an extent but no doubt it is just as effective as legalized liquor. It appears that more drinking is done now than in prohibition. Men will become drunk and commit fornication as long as time shall be, but a Christian cannot vote for such sins when God disapproves them. Endorsement and legalization of this vicious evil does not make it right and good.

3. *Sociability.* To develop social mobility some argue

for "social drinking" at parties, clubs, and conventions. It is much better to gain acceptance through cultural conversation, good manners, courtesy, gentleness, etc. than through questionable practices.

4. *Liberty.* The loud and undisciplined yelp, "This is America, a free country, where we do as we please. It is our business if we drink." Liberty does not mean license. It does not grant license for lawlessness, abuse of others, etc. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." (Gal. 5: 13.) Satisfaction of evil desires is prohibited in Christianity even though it is permitted in America.

In a recent row at the University of Virginia over matters of discipline, one faction quoted Thomas Jefferson the founder of the institution and "Apostle of Democracy" on the subject of liberty to sustain a contention. The current president replied by citing that out of eighty-four students enrolled while Jefferson was rector, fourteen were suspended. Then he concluded that those who accept liberty as a great blessing must also realize the responsibility for self-discipline. Likewise, we are made "free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 2) but we must deny, curb and contain ourselves.

5. *Psychological and Physiological.* It is asserted by some that a man has a right to "drown his sorrows." But they are with him and worse after he comes out of his stupor. He may try to escape reality because of financial reverses, a nagging wife, or disappointment in love. In recent years some doctors and psychologists have pronounced drunkenness as a disease. True, it can lead to *delirium tremens*, or to other functional and organic disorders. If it is a physical malady only, it obviously is not a moral issue. The Bible teaches otherwise. (1 Cor. 6: 10.) If it is only a disease like cancer, a person would not be compelled to answer to God in the judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 10.)

6. *Quibbles.* "One little drink won't hurt," we are told. One dram may lead to another and to another. The inebriated wretch did not become as he is by calculated design; he had to take "a little drink" for the first time. And at last "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." (Prov. 23: 32.) Others declare, "This is not the only sin." How true! All sin must be exposed. This, however, does not justify intemperance. Man will go to any lengths to justify his evils as suggested above but none of these have any merit in fact or logic. We cannot participate, encourage or condone alcoholism.

### WHY A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT DRINK

A child of God cannot be a guzzler of beer and whiskey. He will not make it, sell it, advertise it, dispense it

nor endorse it. He will not traffic in legal or illegal spirits. The reasons are both logical and scriptural.

1. *Physically.* It is good to practice abstinence for our physical well-being. Reputable doctors have frequently declared themselves on the harm of alcohol to the body.

2. *Consequence.* A good way to measure the diabolical effects of drink is to pause and recall the broken homes and broken lives, loss of jobs and loss of lives, and waste of money and waste of ability caused by intoxication. Weaklings apologetically say, "If I leave liquor alone, it will leave me alone." This is untrue for we know that innumerable innocent wives and children suffer, guiltless travelers spill their blood, and society is disturbed by the debauchery and dissipation of drunkards.

Intoxication causes men to mock and to be mocked. They heap scorn on the sacred and divine—the church, the Bible and Christianity. They are mocked in that pleasure is promised but doom is the result. "Wine is a mocker . . ." (Prov. 20: 1) is the way inspiration expresses it.

The evils of strong drink are exemplified in the life of the man enslaved by drink. His description is so strikingly penned by Solomon in the following way: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23: 29-35.) Human nature changes little or none. People are still enticed by "looking on the wine." Today on television and in magazines as well as in stores and bars a psychologically arranged display is arrayed to capture the eye of the consumer. Having yielded to temptation, he may then suffer agony, sorrow, pain and hallucinations, but even so he longingly dreams of his bottle and says, "I will seek it yet again."

3. *Influence.* Drinking Christians (?) will find it difficult to win friends and relatives to Christ. What neighbors would place confidence in one given to drink who endeavors to expose their religious error? Leaders in the church should not drink. Elders are not to be given "to much wine"—that is, not to be drunkards.

Israel of old fell because of idolatry and a corrupted leadership given to strong drink. Isaiah reveals how the priest and prophet "erred" and "stumbled." "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." (Isa. 28: 7.) The

oldsters refused to hear the message of the Lord, and the only hope was through instructing the young. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." (Isa. 28: 9.)

4. *Sinful.* Drunkenness is a sin, a work of the flesh and "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5: 21.) It violates Paul's command, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (Eph. 5: 18.) The drunkard cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6: 10.) Heaven's gate is closed to such a sinner; this is his eternal doom. Liquor will damn souls. It destroys one's usefulness here and in the world to come. We are admonished to be sober and not "drunken in the night." (1 Thess. 5: 6-8.)

5. *Identified with other sins.* Drunkenness often throws together some of the worst people in the most evil environments. The defiled may also gamble, plot, and profane God's holy name. He may become sensual and senseless. (Luke 12: 45.) A drunk man has less sense than an animal. He is not an object of mirth, but rather of pity. Often one sin leads to another and such is the case with drinking. Many sins seem to cluster around it. "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." (Rom. 13: 13.)

6. *Past life forsaken.* The old man of sin has been put off. "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (1 Pet. 4: 3, 4.) Now that he has become a Christian he is no longer a tippler. His friends and cronies "think it strange" when he asserts that he abstains. They do not understand why he is not a "Good Joe" and drink with them on their fishing and hunting trips, and at banquets and conventions. The reason is simple—he is a Christian in the full meaning of the term.

#### CHRISTIANITY IS THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM

This study should make us aware of Bible teaching and God's attitude toward drunkenness. The burning spirit of opposition to the liquor traffic should ever be kept aglow. Christ is able to save drunkards and other profligates, but he will not do so as long as they persist in their wickedness. They should put "on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 13: 14.) This is done by obedience to the gospel. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) Then after becoming a Christian Paul commands "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Rom. 13: 14.) It means something to be a Christian!

## Duties of Elders

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Some weeks ago an article of mine appeared in the **GOSPEL ADVOCATE** on the qualifications of elders. It seems that this article struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many, and I have been asked to write an article dealing more with the duties of elders. This I am glad to do. I want to follow this with one on deacons, and one on withdrawing fellowship from the disorderly.

In the former article we called attention to the many qualifications given by the Holy Spirit for elders. In giving this list one naturally sees many of the distinctive duties of elders. The very fact that God says an elder must have a certain qualification would indicate the duty to be performed by one possessing this qualification.

One of the qualifications is that an elder must be vigilant. He must be watchful. There are so many things for him to watch. Synonyms for the word are attentive and observant. When Paul was at Miletus he called for the Ephesian elders to come to him. Paul had preached a long time in Ephesus. When the elders came to Paul at Miletus he said to them: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20: 29-31.) Here Paul is telling elders things they must watch. These grievous wolves must be kept from the flock. Elders must know enough to know a grievous wolf when they see one. Sometimes these "wolves" look like "sheep." Many a congregation has been torn asunder because the elders did not keep out the wolves.

In this same speech at Miletus Paul laid down some other duties of elders. He told them to take heed unto themselves. They must watch themselves. They were to feed the church. You know one of the outstanding duties of a shepherd is to feed the flock. These elders must be men who are capable of feeding. It is not enough to give the sheep husks. They must have solid food. An elder must be qualified to teach. If he is not qualified to teach he is not qualified to be an elder in the church of the living God. One cannot teach who is not a diligent student. Elders must be careful students of God's word. This requires time to study.

Another duty of an elder is that of hospitality. Here we can see the wisdom of God in saying that an elder must be the husband of one wife. This Christian wife will play a large part in the hospitality end of an elder's work. It will add greatly to the efficiency of the elder's work to be able to bring many dear souls to his own home to teach them by precept and example.

Another duty of an elder is to rule his own house. Of course it goes without saying that he must have a house to rule. His wife must be humble and obedient to her own husband. His children must be in subjection to him. Before he is chosen for an elder he has demonstrated his

ability to rule in his own home. He has not ruled there by a mailed fist but by kindness and courtesy. This ruling ability in a great measure is an inborn trait. Some just have ruling ability and others do not. We go into home after home where we see the ability of the father and husband to rule. It seems that the ones who are being ruled are not aware that they are being ruled. This one that is adept at ruling makes such a little fuss about it. He is not noisy in asserting his power over his wife and children. With this proven ability to rule he has demonstrated that he can take care of the house of God. He can rule the brethren. And if a man cannot rule his own house he cannot take care of the church of God. He just does not have the ability to do it. He is not a ruler.

And right here would be a good place to say that the elders are the rulers of the local church. And I want to hasten to say that the deacons are no more rulers in the congregation than any other member. The elders rule. We are to obey them that have the rule over us. (Heb. 13: 17.) And the ones that rule over us are the elders; not the deacons. In many places the deacons sit in the "business meetings" and form the policies of the church. They seem to have gotten the idea in some way that they are co-rulers with the elders. Where they got such an idea is beyond me. I know they did not get it from the Bible. I have been a few places where there were no elders, but some brethren called themselves deacons and were ruling the congregation. This is an impossible situation. God says to ordain elders in every city. (Tit. 1: 5.) He did not say in case there are none qualified to do the next best thing and appoint deacons to rule the church. No, the deacons are not the rulers. The elders are that, and by no stretch of the imagination can we make rulers out of deacons.

Another duty of an elder is to keep himself above reproach. If he does not do this he will fall into the condemnation of the devil. The elder is a man of great integrity. Those on the outside speak well of him. He is blameless. He is not under accusation. He is not given to wine (nor beer nor hard cider). He is no striker. He is not greedy. On the other hand he is patient.

The bishop is the steward of God. He is over God's house and God's goods. His responsibility along these lines is great.

One of the duties of an elder is to exhort and convince the gainsayer. We think of these duties belonging to the preacher, and when the brethren need help along such lines they usually call on the preacher. But God says the elders must be able to do this. And, brother, if you cannot do this do not aspire to the eldership until such a time as you can do it. There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers whose mouths must be stopped. The only way under heaven to stop their mouths is to "cram" the word of God into them. The elder must be able to do this.

One of the great duties of an elder is to lead the congregation into all good works. Because of his age, wisdom, and experience he can see so much to be done. He must lead the flock into this work. Because of his goodness and sobriety he has the confidence of the flock and they are willing to be led into every good work by such a godly man. He can see opportunities that many of lesser wisdom and experience cannot see. He can see the opportunity of carrying the gospel into neighboring fields and establishing churches where none have existed.

One of the greatest duties of elders is to set the proper example before the flock and before those without the flock. He is an example to the flock. I can remember when I was a boy in the congregation where I have been a member for nearly a half a century I looked to those old men for examples. I can remember a few things where even in my boyish days I could see that the example was not as wholesome as it ought to have been. How careful we all ought to be of our examples, and this goes double for elders, deacons, and preachers. They are much in the public eye. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

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## The Mormons Have Many Baptisms

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After hearing the Mormons talk about one plan of salvation it is surprising to see how they teach otherwise in that they teach many baptisms. The following baptisms have been practiced, at one time or another, by the Mormons.

- (1) Water baptism for oneself.
- (2) Water baptism for another, for the dead.
- (3) Baptism of the Holy Spirit which comes after water baptism and without which water baptism is no good. (James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 74.)
- (4) Baptism of fire which is distinct from Holy Spirit baptism. (Perry, *Joseph Smith's Teaching*, 28.)
- (5) Baptism for doubters. There were some, who when they first came to Salt Lake City, had doubts for they found things there different from what they had expected. Brigham Young said that "my advice to you is, go and be baptized for the remission of sins, and start afresh. . . ." (*Journal of Discourses*, I: 324.)
- (6) Baptism to fulfil all righteousness. All the brothers and sisters who came to the valleys were told to be baptized again for the remission of sins; or, if they had no sins, to fulfil all righteousness. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, II: 8, 9.)
- (7) Baptism to renew covenant. "Baptizing many who desired to renew their covenants." (David Pettegrew, *Times and Seasons*, V: 765; see *Deseret News*, I: 213 "Fri. 6 August, 1847, JDB.) The apostles in G. S. L. Valley renewed their covenants by baptism, and the rest of the company soon after followed their example." (Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 34.)
- (8) Baptism for health. W. W. Phelps, Jan. 1, 1845, in writing of the temple in Nauvoo, said that "the fount in the basement story is for the baptism of the living, for health, for remission of sins, and for the salvation of the dead, as was the case in Solomon's temple, and all temples that God commanded to be built." (*Times and Seasons*, V: 759.) A Mormon told Mr. Caswall, when he visited Nauvoo, that in the baptismal font baptisms were performed "for the healing of diseases." (*The City of the Mormons*, 16.)
- (9) Baptism of the ex-communicated who want to come back to the Mormon Church. Faith in Christ, repentance, and immersion are necessary to get into the Mormon Church. "These rules are indispensable and will apply to those who have been ex-communicated as well as to others." (Editor, *Millennial Star*, I: 281. Parley P. Pratt, editor.)
- (10) Perhaps this one has already been mentioned. "I have heard some of you cursing and swearing, even some of the Elders of Israel. I would be baptized seven times, were I in your place; I would not stop teasing some good Elder to baptize me again and again, until I could think my sins forgiven." (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, II: 9, in 1855.)