

A Discourse on Temperance
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James A. Riddick

Ephesians V. 18

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.”

R. M. College, Oct. 1. 1839

Mr. President,

I am persuaded that the art of distillation when considered in regard to the use of ardent spirits is one of the greatest curses that has ever been inflicted upon the human family. Ever since the apostasy of man from God, He has been prone to seek happiness in the gratification of some improper appetite of his physical nature or mental constitution. And nothing perhaps has exerted a more withering influence upon his moral character, especially as an ~~a~~ rational & accountable being, than that which results from the use of intoxicating liquor. This dreadful article has been the great moral [?] upas, whose branches have spread out as far as the limits of civilization have yet extended, and [?] threaten to diffuse their baleful influence throughout the habitable globe. Thousands and millions have breathed the atmosphere of this fatal poison... Their bodies have been hurried to an awful eternity, where the drunkard will be banished from the presence of God and from the glory of his power. We wd. here stall in this commencement that, the intoxicating principle which in this country has been the chief ~~object~~ cause of drunkenness is not the result of any living process in nature. It cannot be found, and it does not exist among all the living works of God. Those substances, however, which contain or which will produce sugar after they are dead, and have become subject to those laws which then operate on inanimate ~~nature~~ matter, in the incipient stages of decomposition, undergo a process, which chemists call, vinous fermentation. By this process a new substance is formed, called Alcohol. It is composed of hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen, and is an exceedingly subtle and diffusive poison. The elements, by the combination of which this is formed, existed before; but the substance, which this combination forms, did not before exist. It is entirely a new substance, and was not created by the process which operates in the formation of living matter, but by that which operates on a certain kind of matter only after it is dead. And the substance which is thus created is just as different in its nature and effects, from everything that existed before, as the poisonous miasma is different from the fruits and vegetables by the decomposition and decay of which it is produced. Hence it no more follows, that though~~[?, word not shown]~~ fruits and vegetables are proper for man, that therefore Alcohol is proper

than it does because those substances are incipient that therefore poisonous miasma is also harmless. One is formed by a living process, the other by a process which operates only after death. We are the more guarded on this point, because there is much error in the public mind in regard to it. Many suppose that there is some portion of Alcohol in all vegetable substances, whose fermentation after death will produce it. But this is a mistake. It does not exist in any living substance whatever. It is formed only by vinous fermentation, and it can afterwards be extracted from fermented liquors in those ways, the most common of which is the process of distillation.

This art was first discovered about eight or nine hundred years ago by an Arabian alchemist. The product of this new discovery was called alcohol which in the language of that country signified a fine impalpable powder, with which the women painted their faces in order to increase ~~for the purpose of increasing~~ their beauty; and ~~in order to~~ appear to be what in fact they were not.

This liquid however was soon ascertained to be a poison; and it does not appear that any one thought that the time would ever arrive when the article wd. be used as a common drink. It appears that Arnold de Villa, a physician in the south of Europe who lived in the 13th century is supposed to have been the first writer who recommended [?] any case the use of this article as a medicine... But distilled spirits ~~were not prepared on the continent of Europe in large quantities of Europe in large quantities until the commencement of the sixteenth century; and were first introduced among the American colonies about one hundred years afterward.~~ The first ardent spirit known in Europe was made of grapes, and sold as a medicine both in Italy and Spain. The Genoese afterward prepared it from grain and sold it in small bottles at a very high price under the name of aqua vita, or the water of life. Down to the 16th century it continues to be kept exclusively by the apothecary and its use restrained to medicine. But about three hundred years ago the fatal error began to prevail in Great Britain, that ardent spirits as an article of inquiry, or as a help to labor was useful and produced some of the most beautiful effects; and in the short period which has elapsed since its first introduction as a common beverage its consumption has extended in [?] the dominion of to about 40 millions of gallons pr. annum. The consequence has been that intemperance has cost the country more lives, demoralized more persons, broken more hearts, beggared more families, and sent more souls to perdition than every other vice put together.

The fatal error that ardent spirit was useful for men in health did not prevail generally in this country till after the American Revolution. During that mighty struggle in which the soldiers were exposed to many hardships and dangers they were furnished by the government with a portion of this poison, under the fatal delusion that it wd. do them good & render them more courageous in battle. The consequence was, the diseased appetite which this poison ~~creates~~ never fails to create was formed by great numbers, and carried out by them at the close of the war into the community, and was then extended through the land.

In about fifty years after the Revolutionary ~~war~~ this diseased appetite had become so prevalent as to demand annually for its gratification, more than 60 millions of gallons of this liquid fire. It is supposed by the Hon. [?], chief judge of the district of Columbia, who is considered a candid and accurate reporter of principles and facts, that the annual loss in the United States from the use of ardent spirits is not less

than \$94,425,000. In this estimate he has taken no account of what is lost by shipwrecks, sickness, and in various other ways. But even at this rate, the sum in thirty years wd. amount to more than all the houses, all the land, and all the slaves in the U. States.

These were estimated in 1815 at \$1,777,312,908. And if the value of them continues to increase until 1831 in proportion to the increase in population the amt. would be \$2,519,009,222. And the loss to the consumers of ardent spirits, and to the community in thirty years, would according to the foregoing estimate be \$2,832,750,000 which is \$313,740,779 more than the value of all the houses and land in the United States. Thus exhibiting to the world the awful spectacle of a people losing by the use of strong drink in thirty years \$313,740,778 more than the value of their whole country. And all to gratify an artificial and destructive appetite, ~~which now do not need & which they better be without~~, which God does not give them, but which they form by their own voluntary and wicked conduct.

Besides the loss of property which we have estimated the use of ardent spirit has been the cause of more than three fourths of the pauperism, crimes, and wretchedness in our land. It has greatly increased. The number and frequency, and violence of diseases; arose according to the testimony of the most judicious and intelligent physicians on occasions annually the loss of more than thirty thousand lives. What a wide spreading pestilence then do we behold arising from the use of this destructive article! More than 30 thousand human victims annually sacrificed at the shrine of this blazing Moloch. More than 30 thousand immortal beings annually (?) by this torment of liquid fire into the (?) flaming of hell!

And half a million more of our fellow citizens slowly consuming upon the altars of this demon, and by fires which their own hands have kindled. And millions more preparing by habits every day gathering strength to take their places as fast as they have completed the work of self immolation. Who that has the heart of a man, or the Soul of a Christian can contemplate such a scene without shuddering? Where is the Christian that will not implore. Almighty Wisdom and Love to interpose for the destruction of this cruel tyrant, and the rescue of his miserable victims. We are told by Dr. Rush, that it is ardent spirits that fill our poor houses and our jails; our penitentiaries, madhouses, and state prisons. It is ardent spirits that furnish victims for the gallows. They are the greatest curse that God ever inflicts on the world, and my well be called the seven phials of his wrath. They are more destructive in their consequences than war, plague, pestilence, and famine.—They are more destructive than all them combined. They are slow in their march, but sure in their grasp. They consign the body to the grave, and the soul to the prison house of hell.

In view of the evils accruing to the world and the church from the use of intoxicating liquors, it is strange indeed that men should continue to drink this deadly poison, and thus give their influence to propagate the miseries which result from it. Yet there are reasons for this delusion—reasons why they continue to take this poison, and reasons why they continue to increase the quantity.

1. Such is the nature of Alcohol whether in the form of fermented liquor or distilled spirit, that its first effect on the system is a degree of animation or excitement. This by a fundamental law of our nature, is a source of pleasure. Hence we frequently see a very grave, serious, retiring, and sober man after he has worshiped at the shrine of this “rosy God,” for a short time, exhibit the signs of extraordinary excitement. His tongue which is but too apt to speak (?) begins to run like a machine in perpetual motion—he talks fast, he talks long, and he talks loud. He tells all his secrets, tells all he knows and fifty times more; he quotes poetry, makes speeches, and thinks

that he is the greatest orator in the land. He begins to whistle, he begins to dance, he claps his hands, and feels almost tall enough to snuff the moon. ~~Various phrases have been employed to describe the condition of such an individual~~ such a man is said to be a luste, high-up, somewhat boozey-half-snaft, and pretty well fuddled. After a while his head begins to swim, the earth begins to move, the trees begin to whirl, and he can hardly tell whether he is standing upon his feet or upon his head. When he walks, he (?) "to and fro" like a horse with the blind staggers, until he loses the power of locomotion, and remains perfectly helpless until sleep has restored him to his senses. This kind of pleasure men mistake for real good, but what ever the appearance may be, the end is bitterness & death—"At last it will bite like a serpent & sting like an adder." Yet as it gives momentary pleasures, a motive is thereby created to drink it.

2. The use of intoxicating liquor appears to remove trouble and this furnishes another motive to drink. Hence it is frequently the solace of the disappointed lover, or the unfortunate gambler. When riches have made to themselves wings and fly away, when blooming hopes have been (?), when friends (?) forsaken, when the somber shades of sad bereavement have settled upon the mind, how frequently has the (?) of misfortune resorted to the intoxicating bowl, in order to forget his sorrows and drive away his melancholy. A man's wife in this state of New York we are told was seized with the cholera, and he was in great trouble---She died of the disease and he drank to drunkenness. Under its influence, he took her by the hair of the head, and in high glee, arrayed her body acrop the floor and tumbled it into the coffin. It seemed to remove trouble and occasion mirth, but the mirth of the wicked is short, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.
3. The use of ardent spirit seems also to remove poverty and increase riches, and thereby another motive is created for drinking it. A poor man in Massachusetts was entreated by a rich neighbor to renounce the practice of drain drinking. But said he you are rich enough Sir and fell rich enough without it. But I am a poor man, and no body likes always to feel poor; and where a man has taken a little he feels five hundred dollars richer than he did before—And this is the reason that ardent spirit is carried among the Indians upon our (?), and in various portions of the heathen world, that they may be deceived by its use, and thereby cheated out of their money and their property.
4. There are several reasons why men who begin to drink Alcohol, continue its use, and also to increase the quantity, but we shall pass over these for the present to notice some of the effects of intemperance upon individual and social life. The man who has become a drunkard is one of the most unfortunate and miserable beings upon earth,

But if you would see the quintessence of wretchedness go to the family circle, where the drunken husband is found. Look at his wife, look at his children, look at his furniture, and look at every thing around him and you will frequently have cause to turn aside and weep,---I pity that woman whose destiny is united with that of an intemperate man, and children many of the beautiful, the amiable, and the lovely of their sex, have sacrificed every earthly comfort, and rendered themselves miserable forever by joining the matrimonial bond with showy and prosperous looking men, but who were addicted to habits of intoxication.

II. We shall ^in the second place call ~~your~~ ^{you} by calling your attention to some of the means by which the evils of intemperance may be arrested.

1. ~~In the first place~~ let us consider that the use of strong drink whether in the form of fermented liquor or distilled spirits will do us no good whatever. It will not invigorate the body or the mind, for it has been ascertained that it contains no more nourishment than ~~the~~ melted lens, or the destructive lightening. It will not increase the number of your respectable friends, nor will it recommend ~~you~~ ^{us} to the most refined society. It is true we might live in the temperate use of pure wine, without violating any precept of the Bible yet when this article has been abused, and is likely to become the source of intensive mischief, we are especially bound by the word of god, upon the ground of experiencing to lay it aside. St. Paul declared if he caused his brethren to offend by eating meat or drinking wine, he wd. Neither eat meat nor drink again while he lived in the world.
2. Let us recollect also that the use of ardent spirit prevails among the most degraded portions of the community. Who could bear the idea of being associated with such victims as we frequently find lounging about the haunts of dissipation, and altho' respectable men are living in what they call the temperance use of spirits yet they are in the direct road which has conducted thousands to wretchedness and degradation. Under the influence of this deadly poison men will frequently slander ^their fries abuse the nearest relative, indulge the vilest passions, and cover themselves and their families with infamy. Hence we are embarked in the language of inspiration. "Look not thou on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup: at last it will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. : thine eyes also shall behold strange women, and they heart shall utter perverse things. Hence it is said in the nervous language of Pollock
" She urged him still to fill another cup
_____ And at morn
I look'd, and saw him not among the youths
I heard his father mourn, his mother weep
For none returned that went with her. The dead
Were in her house; her guest in the depths of hell
She move the winding sheet of souls and laid
Them in the urn of everlasting death.
3. Let us recollect also that the habit of drinking will tend to enervate the mind, and render all it faculties obtuse, and incapable of strong and vigourous exercise and this remark will apply to every species of intemperance whether in eating, drinking or sleeping, and especially to the use of ^that nauseating weed called Tobacco whether in the form of the quid, the snuff box, or the pipe. The use of this article tends to weaken and debilitate all the moral powers and some of the totally destroys.
We are told by Dr. McAlister, innumerable instances may be found where
^intemperance ~~drunkenness~~ has followed as the legitimate consequences of using tobacco.

“Smoking and chewing says Dr. Rush, dispose very much to the use of ardent spirits” And universal observation will confirm this testimony. Go to the bar room of many public houses in our country, and observe the numerous list of idlers ~~these~~ who resort there to pass away their time & you will frequently find that the cigar and the glass of brandy and water regularly succeed each other as they naturally excite each other_ Follow that band of young men who are strolling the streets of our southern towns on the Sabbath each of them with a cigar in his mouth, and it is likely you will find them winding their course to some tavern or porter house, that they may satiate their thirst with a glass of brandy and water. And thousands of our youth are thus led on and ultimately confirmed I habits of intemperance.

King James Consider say Dr. Clarke how disagreeable ^in the custom of using Tobacco to those who do not follow it. An atmosphere of tobacco effluvia surrounds you whethersoever you go: ~~every article about you~~ ~~partakes~~ ~~smells of it~~ ^And your apartments, your clothes and ~~even~~ your breath^? Of it. And says the same author our churches and chapel are greatly abused by the tobacco chewers who frequent them:: and kneeling before the supreme being, is rendered in many seats impracticable because of the large quantity of tobacco saliva which is ejected in all directions. Dr. Franklin declared to one of his friends a few months before his death that he had never used tobacco in any way in the course of his long life, and that he had never met with a man that used ^it who advised him to follow his example.

If then we won't preserve our minds unimpaired ^and our morals uncorrupted let us before beware of strong drink, and every unnecessary and pernicious practice that may serve to a create an appetite to for this fascinating and fatal poison ~~intoxicating liquor~~. Let us be deeply impressed with the sentiment of Dr. Cullen a distinguished professor of Medicine at Edinburg. “Simple matter, says he, without any addiction, is the proper drink of mankind.” The water drinker says Dr. James Johnson, an eminent physician in London, glide tranquilly through life without much exhilaration and escapes many diseases to which otherwise he would be subject . while the wine drinker realizes xxx short but vivid periods of rapture, and long intervals of gloom. And let it be recollected, that water was the only beverage of the human family in their primeval state. A river flowed from Paradise, and from the moment that river began to water the garden ^of Eden till the present hour no human invention has equaled thy simple beverage.

4. Another important measure in accomplishing the object which we propose is a combined effort, by voluntary association ^W know that much has been said, and much prejudice has been excited against temperance societies. The objections are various, and some of them contradictory, but all of them, we believe, erroneous. We do not pretend to vindicate all the doings of every society, or of every agent of those societies; but the principle is never the less a good one. What can be done of an extensive public character without combination. The associate for purposes of state and for purposes of church, for charity, for literature, for mercantile, mechanical and agricultural ~~purposes~~ enterprises. In short, almost every thing of common interest is more or less promoted by combination. Of how much consequence is it then when we wish to change the habits of a consequence is it then when we wish to change the habits of a whole nation_ habits that have grown inveterate by long usage_ that have become associated with all that is courteous in high life and with all that is merry and jovial in low life that have entrenched themselves in the strong holds of appetite and avarice how

important is it we say, in changing such habits that we concentrate the influence of all who are friendly to the enterprise in a firm, extended, and efficient combination? A combination that shall overlook all other differences, & disregard all other castes, in a general co-operation to xxx revolutionize public sentiment and public manners, on a question of equal interest to all philanthropists and Christians. We know there are objections to temperance societies; but most of these objections originate with the lovers of rum or those who for the sake of XXX gain, pander to the drunkard's appetite, regardless of his present and eternal welfare_ such persons retail scandalous stories about "cold water men" they impugn their motives and laugh at their efforts. They are ready to say it is "a sectarian plan", "an attempt to unite church and state", "a piece of priestcraft to rob independent men-citizens of their rights." __ These objections are to ridiculous to merit a serious reply; and coming from the source which they frequently do, they are a high commendation of the measures adopted. ~~But there are other objections made by the well-meaning.~~

But there are other objections made by the well-meaning and the friends to temperance_ "I am temperate now" says one and there is no need of my joining". Another says if I can be temperate without joining ^a the society, joining will not help me". A third imagines it will be a reflection upon his past life to join a temperance society. Now all these objections originate in a wrong view of the subject. It is not for your own sake that you should join in the work, but for the sake of others. Do you ask how this can help the cause? We need only point you to what has been effected by temperance societies, to answer this question_ the present philosophy is to test all theories by their practical results. What then have temperance societies done? They have embodied more than half a million on the principle of entire abstinence. They have thrown an influence over as many more who practice upon the same principle This also will bring at least two millions of children under the influence of the same principles

Temperance societies have waked up the nation to its danger; have carried an influence into the army and many have raised the voices of thousands who were before silent, I behalf of temperance. Their tracts are in circulation, their temperance periodicals, and their addresses. Their reports and the reports of their agents, have collected and spread out before the public the statistics of intemperance and have proved incontestably the fallacy of the old doctrine, that ardent spirits are useful and necessary. __ Do you ask then of what use it for me to join the temperance society? I hope not__ Every one who joins in good faith, helps on this work, and strengthens the cause. Here then is a way to do good__ a great door and an effectual one is opened. And what saith the word of God? To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

The results of the temperance reformation are truly encouraging to every friend of this noble enterprise. The time was when the decanter was introduced almost in every polite circle_ The time was when the courtyard was the battle ground of twenty fights upon a public day_ The time was when the bar room was an important source of income to most public houses The time was when farmers could not gather in their produce without the use of strong drink_ the time was when a candidate could hardly be elected to the legislature without purchasing a large

number of votes with the bottle_ but a great and glorious change has taken place, and the people are becoming more temperate

But the victory has not yet been gained_ the struggle is yet in progress_ the evils are yet in existence, & the country will still be infested with drunkards so long as men continue to use ardent spirits. Nothing less than total abstinence from all that intoxicates will complete the triumph.

If the evils of intemperance could be destroyed altogether the gospel would weild a powerful influence.