

A GLUTTON

A WINEBIBBER

A FRIEND

Friends of Christ



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Divine Viewpoint

www.divineviewpoint.com

May 1988

A GLUTTON, A WINEBIBBER, A FRIEND

“The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children,” Matthew 11:19.

The Lord Jesus Christ seldom ever took notice of His enemies slanders. “When He was reviled, He reviled not again.” Christ never took insult personally because He was representing someone else, God the Father. He was an ambassador Himself representing God our Father. Whenever He did take notice of His slanderers, **it was for the sake of those whom it harmed to distort His GRACE and His beauty.**

So here He speaks, without the slightest trace of irritation, of the capricious inconsistency of condemning Himself and John on precisely opposite grounds. John did not suit the critics either because John neither eats nor drinks. Well, you would think that Jesus Christ would be hailed since He does eat and drink. But He pleases them just as little as John did.

What was at the root of this contrary working of dislike? IT WAS DISLIKE FOR THE TRUTHS THEY BOTH TAUGHT, THE REJECTION OF THE WISDOM OF WHICH THEY WERE THE MESSENGERS, BOTH CHRIST AND JOHN THE BAPTIST. They both had the same message, even though they were two distinct, different personalities. “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”

WHEN MEN DO NOT LIKE THE MESSAGE, NOTHING THAT THE MESSENGERS DO, OR ARE, IS RIGHT. They try to discredit the messenger, and thereby frustrate the message, or discredit the message of the messenger. Never mind consistency, but object to this form of Christian teaching that it is too harsh, and too that, that it is too soft; to this man that he is always thundering condemnation, that that he is always preaching mercy and GRACE; to one, that he has

too much to say about duty, to another, that he dwells too much on GRACE; to this presentation of the Gospel, that it is too learned and doctrinal, to that, that it is too sentimental and emotional, and so on and so on.

A generation of children who neither like “piping nor lamenting,” lives still. We want to study in this text the caricature of Christ which His own lips repeat without a sign of anger. THIS IS THE ONLY CALUMNY OF ANTAGONISTS REPORTED BY CHRIST HIMSELF. We owe our knowledge of its currency to this saying.

Like other words of His enemies, this saying is a distorted refraction of His glory. The facts it embodies are facts. The conclusions it draws are false. The premise is true, the conclusion is false.

If Jesus Christ had not come eating and drinking, He could not have been called gluttonous and a winebibber. If He had not drawn publicans and prostitutes to Him in a conspicuous manner and degree, He could not have been called their friend if He wasn't their friend.

The charge, like all others, is a tribute to the GRACE and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us see if we can see the Truth that is caricatured here. We will take two principles separately for though closely connected they are distinct, and cover different ground.

1. HIS ENEMIES WITNESS TO CHRIST'S PARTICIPATION IN OUR COMMON LIFE. AND THAT PARTICIPATION IN LIFE WITNESSES TO HIS TRUE MANHOOD.

Significant is the use of this title, “Son of man” in this context. Because He is so, He must pass into all human circumstances. If we look at it in the light of the incarnation, the simple fact that He shared our common lot in all things assumes proportions of majestic condescension, extend to all physical

necessities and to simple material pleasure. What a witness this hostile criticism is to Christ's genial identification of Himself with homely feasters.

IT ALSO SETS FORTH THE HIGHEST TYPE OF MANHOOD. John could be ascetic, but the "pattern Man" could not. **The true perfecting of humanity is not the extirpation, but the control of the flesh by the Spirit.** And in accordance with this thought, we may see in the eating and drinking Christ, the pattern for the Christian way of life.

Asceticism is not the noblest form of sanctity. There is nothing more striking in the Old Testament than the way in which its heroes and saints mingle in all ordinary duties. They are warriors, statesmen, shepherds, they buy, they sell. Asceticism came later, along with formalisms of other sorts. When devotion cools, it is crusted with superstition and external marks of godliness. Propriety is posturing in worship, casuistry in the interpretation of law, and abstinence from common enjoyments, came to pharisaic times. And into such a world Jesus Christ came, eating and drinking.

But His bearing in these matters is example for us. They were rigidly kept in subordination. They were all done in communion with God (fellowship, the filling of the Holy Spirit). **So He, Christ, has hallowed all by taking part in all.**

Christ should be present in all our material enjoyments. We are in full time Christian service as He was. If you cannot think that He is with you, if you cannot conceive of His being there, that is not fit enjoyment for you. The tendency of this day is to take a wider view of the liberty allowed to Christians in regard to partaking in material enjoyment, and has a guideline. We have heard and read of the examples of Christ invoked to justify unchristian laxity and excess. The liberty permitted to Christians in these matters is to be limited with the limits within which Christ's was confined.

He ate, but didn't overeat. He drank, but He didn't get drunk. **The excessive use of innocent things is not justified by Christ's example, nor is the use of things innocent in themselves, which are mixed up with harmful things.**

Christ's example does not warrant the importance attached to luxury, the waste on mere eating and drinking. It is sometimes quoted as against total abstinence. That has no bearing on the question. But if He gave up Heaven for us, I think that they who give up an indulgence for the sake of theirs are in the line of His action. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off."

Asceticism is not the highest, but it is sometimes necessary. If my indulgence in innocent things hurts me, or if my abstinence from them would help others, or increase my power for good, or if innocent things are inter-twisted with things not innocent, then it is vain to try to shelter under Christ's example, and the only right course for His disciple is to abridge His liberty.

He came eating and drinking, therefore His followers may use all innocent earthly blessings and bodily pleasures, subject to this one law. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And with this gracious solemn warning, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Drinking wine in the ancient world was the custom because of the pollution and contamination of the water supply. And in some areas of the world the same situation still exists. Don't drink the water.

SECONDLY, HIS ENEMIES WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST AS THE FRIEND OF OUTCASTS.

This is the fact that Jesus Christ drew them to Himself and evidently was glad to have them round Him. The inference naturally to low natures was "NOSCITURE A SOCIIS," and that the bond between Christ and them was common and evil tendencies and ways. His censors could not conceive of anyone's seeking the outcasts from GRACE and

from compassion and for their good. "Came to seek the lost and they were lost."

CHRIST'S CONSORTING WITH THEM WAS THE REVELATION OF HIS LOVE FOR THEM. **It meant no complicity with, nor minimizing of, sinfulness.** His sternness is as conspicuous as His love and GRACE. He warned, rebuked, tried to win back. **The highest purity is not repellent to sinners.** So in Jesus Christ is the combination of tenderest love and intense moral earnestness. How difficult for anything but actual sight of such a life to have painted it. Where did Matthew get such an embodiment of two attitudes so unlike each other, and which we so seldom see united in fact?

This combination of perfect harmony and proportion of these two attitudes, is a strong presumption in favor of the historical Truth of Christ of the Gospels. But remember if we take His own statement, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." we are to see in this gracious consorting with sinners not only the love of a perfectly pure manhood, but a revelation of the mind of Christ. And that adds wonderfulness and awe to the fact. This Man to whom sinners were drawn by strange attraction, in whom they found the highest purity and yet softest tenderness, there in revealed God.

IT WITNESSES ALSO TO HIS BOUNDLESS HOPE. No outcasts were hopeless in His view. To man's eyes there are hopeless classes, just as there are no metals that cannot be volatilized if exposed to intense heat.

Carry the most thick ribbed ice into the sun and it will thaw. So the Christian view of mankind is much more hopeful than that of mere educationists or moralists. None of them paint human nature as black as it does, but none of them have such boundless confidence in the possibility of making it lustrously white. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as wool." **So we must, as Christ did, urge them that none are beyond the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His Divine Spirit can change any man. There are no incurables in the judg-**

ment of the great Physician, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

IT ALSO WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH THAT GROSS SIN DOES NOT SHUT FROM HIM SO MUCH AS DOES SELF-COMPLACENT IGNORANCE OF OUR OWN NEED. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, past, present and future, and sin is no longer the issue, Christ became sin for us, was judged for our sins. The issue now is Christ and Christ only. He died for sinners and publicans. "THEY THAT ARE WHOLE NEED NOT A PHYSICIAN, BUT THEY THAT ARE SICK." Where should the physician be but at the sick man's bedside. This Physician makes house calls, and He has a gracious bedside manner.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The impassable barrier between us and Christ is fancying that we are not sinners and do not need Him as our personal Saviour. This boundless hopefulness and seeking after the outcasts is the unique glory of Christianity.

What has been the mainspring of all movement for their elevation? What broke the chains of slavery? What has sent men to the ends of the Earth for the elevation of savage races? What is the motive power in the benevolent works of this day? Is it philosophical altruism or is it Christian faith?

No doubt, there are some sporadic movements among people who do not accept the Gospel. At present I doubt if you will ever get any large continuous, self-sacrificing efforts for the outcasts unless they are the direct result of the Spirit of Jesus Christ moving on men who owe their own deliverance to Christ. We have not yet seen agnostic missionary societies or the like. This Spirit must mark all living Christianity.

If ever churches forget their obligations to the "publicans and sinners," they will cease to grow. It will be a sign that they have lost their hold of Christ. They will soon die, and no mourners will attend their funeral. It is a good sign when churches are awake as to their obligation to the outcast. **One we must**

heed that we go to them as Christ did, making no compromise with sin, speaking no false flatteries, and bent on one thing, their emancipation from evil which is slaying them.

Let us take this principle for ourselves, that Jesus Christ is our Friend because He is the Friend of sinners and we are sinners. Degrees of sinfulness vary, but the fact is invariable. **The universality of sinfulness makes the universality of Christ's love and GRACE the more wonderful and blessed.**

If Christ did not love sinners, there would be none for Him to love. We may be His enemies, or may neglect all His beseechings, but He is still our Friend, wishing us well, and desiring to bless us and pour out His GRACE on us.

But He cannot give us His deepest friendship unless we are willing to recognize our need of Him as our personal Saviour. We must come to Him on the footing of

transgressors if we are to come to Him at all. He will deliver us from our sins.

How has He shown His friendship to you? "Greater love hath no man than this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." To be friends of Christ is the highest honour and blessing of GRACE. "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "He was called the friend of God." Abraham's name in Mohammedan lands is still "EL KHALIL," the companion or "friend." That is our highest title. Christ's friends will not continue sinners. "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Do you know my Friend, gluttonous, winebibber Friend, Saviour?

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