

# The Truth about Wine, Women and the King

16<sup>th</sup> Degree

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The arguments for the comparative strength of wine, women and the king are all interesting as we see them portrayed in the degree's ritual, as well as entertaining, right up to the point that they are trumped by yet another eloquent presentation about "truth." As "soldiers of truth" striving to leave a noble heritage, the temptation is to interpret this final explanation as the "correct" (or perhaps complete) interpretation. It is relatively easy to see how none of the former three (wine, women and the king), alone, lead to independent thought or self-governance – yet there is considerable strength in each, by nature. The truth may lie in that which is fundamental to many Masonic discussions, namely balance.

Most of the time when we think of balance, we consider two things, much as duality also hints at the many opposites that bring balance to life. Even the scales that indicate balance show two sides – but there are often, as in this case, more than two sides to every issue. As we discuss this, I cannot help but go back to some issues with numbers – three in particular since there are three choices provided for which is stronger. In so doing, my attention is drawn briefly to the three levels of comprehension – literal, symbolic and esoteric. I cannot help but think that our attention is drawn literally to the explanations given, and that our understanding may stop at the symbolic most of the time (as perhaps would be normal) when the esoteric, ironically, continues to stare us in the face concerning the truth about the matter.

Another aspect of the number 3 that comes to my mind is another group – **body, mind and spirit**. I cannot help but see a relationship between these three (although it may be a unique perspective) and the requirement for them to be in balance, probably because I can also relate these three to wine, women and the king as well, though in a different order.

I would relate "body" to women as this reminds us of the weaknesses of the flesh. It would seem that Pike, in probably most of his writing, did not spend much time on the issues of the body for a number of reasons, to include the fact that people physically worked much harder in his day and the concern and requirement to "exercise" and stay healthy was not nearly as prominent as it is in our time—partially as a benefit of those who have gone before us, improved many things and left us a noble heritage.

"Mind" would relate primarily to the king for me (and I could probably relate it to wine as well). I relate it to the king though because if you subject yourself to simply do what the king tells you to do all the time (the king could be interpreted as laws or any other authority figure), you are not thinking for yourself and not taking control of your own life and making your own decisions.

The closest parallel to "spirit" is wine – in that alcohol (or many drugs for that matter) tends to cause people to not care and just go with whatever is happening, good or bad. Mind and spirit are closely related just as the effects of following the king or drinking wine tend to be barriers to taking charge of your own life and making your own decisions. A major difference between them is that by altering your mind with wine, you have made the sober decision to not do anything positive for yourself or society, whereas if you remain sober and still do not take any positive steps, you've simply decided to let others think for you – and probably will blame them if it doesn't turn out right.

The discussion of body, mind and spirit and the many combinations of relationships of them to wine, women and the king are numerous. The point is simply that there can be (and apparently is) a relationship. And there could be a relationship to the levels of comprehension as well – literal to the body (women); symbolic to the mind (king); esoteric to the spirit (wine). But it begs the question as to where the truth comes in.

We can easily enough see the flaws in living under the rule of wine and divorcing ourselves from taking control or making any decisions – just rolling with the punches. Similarly, we can see how easy it would be to simply do what we're told (living under the king) and not taking any responsibility for our actions there, too ("He told me to do it..."). We could also follow our more base instincts, too, and simply give in to all the things our body desires, be it women or many other impulses (which may include such things as overeating or some other way that ultimately would abuse our bodies regularly).

The "truth" about these three is that none of them are stronger by themselves – that if you followed one road or another and ignored the other two – you would be, in essence, out of balance and lacking in the other two areas of need. If you put them in balance, they are each stronger, together, much the way three notes on a properly tuned (balanced) piano are stronger when played together (so many standard chords are played with three fingers, too...). You could even say that it's another lesson in moderation.

While we are soldiers of truth, we cannot take the fourth option and focus on it alone either and ignore the other three as that, too, would put us out of balance. We must always strive to stay in balance and tend to the body, mind and spirit. The body has needs and must be taken care of just as there are times when it is appropriate to "let your hair down" and enjoy yourself, perhaps truly enjoying a glass of wine with friends...and there are many "laws" that make sense that should be obeyed, not just because someone said to do it but because it is the right thing to do – just as there are things we should do that are not written down as laws but are just as essential to our well-being. All of these things, the autonomous man has considered and made the conscious decision to do for himself, taking charge of his own life and the direction it goes, blaming no one but himself if anything goes awry...taking charge of keeping himself balanced.