

July 31, 2014

President J. Paul Nyquist,
Moody Bible Institute
820 North LaSalle Blvd.
Chicago, Illinois 60610-3284

Dear President Nyquist,

It is with a deep sense of regret, and after many months of thought and prayer as a radio board, that Community Bible Church who has been entrusted with the stewardship of WAGP 88.7 FM, will formally break its tie with Moody Radio. We went on the air with Moody in December of 1988 as a low-powered 3,000 watt station. Over the years, by the grace of God, we have grown from 3,000 to 6,000 to 25,000 and now 100,000 watts with some promising new developments to possibly expand our radio presence even more. We have felt a part of the Moody family, have sent many students to Moody Bible Institute from our own church fellowship, and have recommended MBI to literally hundreds and hundreds of Marine families, who at one time or another were members of our church.

I am sure you realize by now that the obvious reason for our formally breaking with Moody Radio concerns your new policy about alcohol, tobacco, and gambling. I know that some people may view our position as 'legalistic,' and as driven by rules. Unfortunately, many who want to honor the Lord and please Him are labeled today as old-fashioned, untaught, and narrow-minded. Nonetheless, being one of the largest churches in the state of South Carolina, and with radio presence on the East Coast through Search The Scriptures radio, we feel a responsibility to lead in a positive Christ centered way - - and I have no doubt that, as the president of Moody, you feel the same way.

I do not understand the tobacco issue in terms of moderation. I know some, like RC Sproul, have taken this position of moderation. He has influenced many in the "young, restless, and Reformed" variety of Christianity to this same position. It seems more and more, that in order to be Reformed or to be considered a 'cutting edge' evangelical, one is practically required to drink and smoke, evidencing a new "Christian liberty." What many of these new burgeoning church leaders do not hear is that R.C., whom I love and respect, now suffers from emphysema and is very limited in his capacity to travel and speak.

In terms of alcohol, the pastors, teachers and ministries that we broadcast including Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Dr. David Jeremiah, John MacArthur, Dr. Charles Stanley, Alistair Begg, Dr. Robert Jeffress, Dr. Jack Graham, Dr. Tony Evans, Dr. James Dobson and Dennis Rainey all advocate abstinence from both alcohol and tobacco. They arrive at this position of abstinence in different ways, but they all end up in the same place. Even your own, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, whom I deeply love and respect, when asked several months ago during his question and answer segment about Christians using alcohol in moderation, he came out against it. He thought it very 'unwise' for Christians to use alcohol.

To mention some of the more common reasons, I know many Christians, teachers, pastors and biblical scholars have argued for abstinence on the basis of abstaining from the appearance of evil, being careful not to cause a brother to stumble, and because they believe that in our culture the use of alcohol does not glorify God. In addition, many great biblical scholars like J. Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, and Norman Geisler, all who have been interviewed on Moody Radio in years past (and whom you probably had at DTS as I did), have opposed Christians using alcohol on the basis of the 'strong drink' argument. They would not see abstinence from alcohol as simply some rule or for that matter even a gray area, but rather a moral dictate of Scripture. This position, once it is understood, is very difficult to argue against. Apart from using wine to purify water, as a medicine for the stomach, as an antiseptic on wounds, or to be given as an act of mercy to a dying man, these men opposed the use of alcohol as a moral violation of Scripture. I have attached Dr. Geisler's article, "A Biblical Perspective on Wine Drinking" (Bibliotheca Sacra, Volume 139, January-March 1982) which Dr. Pentecost and Dr. Walvoord ascribed to when they were alive. I have also included Dr. Robert Stein's article, (Christianity Today, "Wine Drinking in the New Testament" June 20, 1975, pp. 9-11) for your consideration.

I know times are changing, but it is not always wise to change with those times. Between the two Moody graduates on our staff and the large number of students we have sent to Moody (not to mention a number of Moody students who have done summer internships in our church), we know from first-hand testimony that a problem already exists in the student body at Moody (as in many other evangelical colleges) concerning the abuse of alcohol. Maybe it is larger than you really understand. In either case, we believe your new policy will open the door to encourage further abuse. It is the encouragement many students need. Add to all of this, God has called leaders in the church, which your institution is attempting to develop, to a higher standard. And certainly as those called to a higher standard to serve as leaders, we will be judged by a stricter standard (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17).

Our church is blessed of God to be able to support and partner on a monthly basis with several hundred missionaries. Every single missionary we support, representing a broad spectrum of evangelical mission agencies, restrict their missionaries from using alcohol and tobacco (no one mentions gambling - - that seems to be a given). To have your staff and faculty model 'moderation' to the student body, only to be later told when applying

to a mission agency and the vast majority of local churches that they are to abstain, is to send a confusing message.

I tried to get the policy in writing, so that I was not responding to second-hand information, but after my repeated attempts, Moody never responded. To his credit, David Woodworth was as helpful as he was allowed to be, sending a copy of your letter and an audio file of explanation to me. My sense, however, is that Moody cannot come out and just boldly state their position to the Body of Christ. Maybe you fear losing funds or being discredited as a reliable evangelical institution. If this decision was driven to attract the kind of 'scholarship' you hope to attract as a school, in my view it is a big mistake. Wheaton has sought such 'scholars' and they continue to drift further and further away from their roots. Many of their young graduates, whom I have met in applying for positions, are anything but impressive.

This was a very difficult decision for us to make as a radio station. We have barely even mentioned our decision, and I am already getting a response of total shock from many, who for years, have contributed to Moody Radio. The financial loss will not come from the younger generation, but from older, seasoned Christians, and some who will rewrite their wills because they have lost their respect for Moody over this decision. I can promise you that your loss over time will be in the millions of dollars. I still hope you will reconsider. I apologize for being lengthy, but a twenty-five year plus relationship needs at least some explanation.

Yours in Christ,

Carl J. Broggi

P.S. I have also enclosed a copy of Rick Forschner's letter to radio listeners who have just recently heard of our decision. Rick has served as the general manager of our station for the past seventeen years, and I think his response is excellent and should be read. We have also sent this letter with accompanying attachments to our church leadership, a few select pastors and other Moody affiliates so that they understand our reason for leaving the Moody Bible Network radio family. We do not feel that we are leaving Moody, but that Moody left us.

Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times

ROBERT H. STEIN

As evangelicals we maintain that the Bible is for us the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is our final authority in all matters of doctrine (faith) and ethics (practice). Yet the Bible was not written to evangelicals living in the twentieth century. The science—or better, the art—of interpreting the biblical text so that the revelation of God written centuries ago is meaningful and correctly understood today is called “hermeneutics.” The basic principle of hermeneutics, to be somewhat simplistic, is that the question “What does it mean for us today?” must be preceded by the question “What did it mean for them yesterday?” If we do not seek first to understand what the text meant when it was written, it will be very difficult to interpret intelligently what it means and demands of us today.

My subject here is the use of the term “wine” in the New Testament. Some readers may already be thinking, “Is he going to try to tell us that wine in the Bible means grape juice? Is he going to try to say that the wine mentioned in the New Testament is any different from the wine bottled today by Christian Brothers or Château Lafite-Rothschild or Mogen David?” Well, my answers are no and yes. No, the wine of the Bible was not unfermented grape juice. Yes, it was different from the wine of today.

In ancient times wine was usually stored in large pointed jugs called *amphorae*. When wine was to be used it was poured from the *amphorae* into large bowls called *kraters*, where it was mixed with water. Last year I had the privilege of visiting the great archaeological museum in Athens, Greece, where I saw dozens of these large *kraters*. At the time it did not dawn on me what their use signified about the drinking of wine in biblical times. From these *kraters*, cups or *kylix* were then filled. What is important for us to note is that before wine was drunk it was mixed with water. The *kylix* were filled not from the *amphorae* but from the *kraters*.

The ratio of water to wine varied. Homer (*Odyssey* IX, 208f.) mentions a ratio of 20 to 1, twenty parts water to one part wine. Pliny (*Natural History* XIV, vi, 54) mentions a ratio of eight parts water to one part wine. In one ancient work, Athenaeus’s *The Learned Banquet*, written around A.D. 200, we find in Book Ten a collection of statements from earlier writers about drinking practices. A quotation from a play by Aristophanes reads: “‘Here, drink this also, mingled three and two.’ DEMUS. ‘Zeus! But it’s sweet and bears the three parts well!’” The poet Euenos, who lived in the fifth century B.C., is also quoted:

*The best measure of wine is neither much nor very little;
For ‘tis the cause of either grief or madness.*

It pleases the wine to be the fourth, mixed with three nymphs.

Here the ratio of water to wine is 3 to 1. Others mentioned are:

3 to 1—Hesiod
4 to 1—Alexis
2 to 1—Diodes
3 to 1—Ion
5 to 2—Nichocharēs
2 to 1—Anacreon

Sometimes the ratio goes down to 1 to 1 (and even lower), but it should be noted that such a mixture is referred to as “strong wine.” Drinking wine unmixed, on the other hand, was looked upon as a “Scythian” or barbarian custom. Athenaeus in this work quotes Mnesitheus of Athens:

The gods has revealed wine to mortals, to be the greatest blessing for those who use it aright, but for those who use it without measure, the reverse. For it gives food to them that take it and strength in mind and body. In medicine it is most beneficial; it can be mixed with liquid and drugs and it brings aid to the wounded. In daily intercourse, to those who mix and drink it moderately, it gives good cheer; but if you overstep the bounds, it brings violence. Mix it half and half, and you get madness; unmixed, bodily collapse.

It is evident that wine was seen in ancient times as a medicine (and as a solvent for medicines) and of course as a beverage. Yet as a beverage it was always thought of as a mixed drink. Plutarch(*Symposiacs* III, ix), for instance, states. “We call a mixture ‘wine,’ although the larger of the component parts is water.” The ratio of water might vary, but only barbarians drank it unmixed, and a mixture of wine and water of equal parts was seen as “strong drink” and frowned upon. The term “wine” or *oinos* in the ancient world, then, did not mean wine as we understand it today but wine mixed with water. Usually a writer simply referred to the mixture of water and wine as “wine.” To indicate that the beverage was not a mixture of water and wine he would say “unmixed(*akratesteron*) wine.”

One might wonder whether the custom of mixing wine with water was limited to the ancient Greeks. The burden of proof would be upon anyone who argued that the pattern of drinking wine in Jewish society was substantially different from that of the examples already ‘given. And we do have examples in both Jewish and Christian literature and perhaps in the Bible that wine was likewise understood as being a mixture of wine and water. In several instances in the Old Testament a distinction is made between “wine” and “strong drink.” In Leviticus 10:8, 9, we read, “And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, ‘Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting. . . .’” Concerning the Nazarite vow Numbers 6:3 states that the Nazarite “shall separate himself from wine and strong drink.” This distinction is

found also in Deuteronomy 14:26; 29:6; Judges 13:4, 7, 14; First Samuel 1:15; Proverbs 20:1; 31:4,6; Isaiah 5:11, 22; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12; and Micah 2:11.

The 1901 *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Vol. 12, p. 533) states that in the rabbinic period at least “‘yayin’ [or wine] ‘is to be distinguished from ‘shekar’ [or strong drink]: the former is diluted with water (mazug’); the latter is undiluted (‘yayin hal’).” In the Talmud, which contains the oral traditions of Judaism from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, there are several tractates in which the mixture of water and wine is discussed. One tractate (Shabbath 77a) states that wine that does not carry three parts of water well is not wine. The normal mixture is said to consist of two parts water to one part wine. In a most important reference (Pesahim 108b) it is stated that the four cups every Jew was to drink during the Passover ritual were to be mixed in a ratio of three parts water to one part wine. From this we can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that the fruit of the vine used at the institution of the Lord’s Supper was a mixture of three parts water to one part wine. In another Jewish reference from around 60 B.C. we read, “It is harmful to drink wine alone, or again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious and enhances one’s enjoyment” (II Maccabees 15:39).

In ancient times there were not many beverages that were safe to drink. The danger of drinking water alone raises another point. There were several ways in which the ancients could make water safe to drink. One method was boiling, but this was tedious and costly. Different methods of filtration were tried. The safest and easiest method of making the water safe to drink, however, was to mix it with wine. The drinking of wine (i.e., a mixture of water and wine) served therefore as a safety measure, since often the water available was not safe. (I remember drinking some water in Salonica, Greece, that would have been much better for me had it been mixed with wine or some other purifying agent.)

When we come to the New Testament the content of the wine is never discussed. The burden of proof, however, is surely upon anyone who would say that the “wine” of the New Testament is substantially different from the wine mentioned by the Greeks, the Jews during the intertestamental period, and the early church fathers. In the writings of the early church fathers it is clear that “wine” means wine mixed with water. Justin Martyr around A.D. 150 described the Lord’s Supper in this way: “Bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president sends up prayers and thanksgiving”(Apology 1, 67, 5). Some sixty-five years later Hippolytus instructed the bishops that they shall “eucharistize [bless] first the bread into the representation of the Flesh of Christ; and the cup mixed with wine for the antitype of the Blood which was shed for all who have believed in Him”(Apostolic Tradition XXIII, 1). Cyprian around A.D. 250 stated in his refutation of certain heretical practices:

Nothing must be done by us but what the Lord first did on our behalf, as that the cup which is offered in remembrance of Him should be offered mingled with wine. . . .

Thus, therefore, in considering the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, even as wine alone cannot be offered. For if anyone offer wine only, the blood of Christ is dissociated from us: but if the water be alone, the people are dissociated from Christ. . . . Thus the cup of the Lord is not indeed water alone, nor wine alone, unless each be mingled with the other [Epistle LXII, 2, 11 and 13].

Unmixed wine and plain water at the Lord's Supper were both found unacceptable. A mixture of wine and water was the norm. Earlier in the latter part of the second century Clement of Alexandria stated:

It is best for the wine to be mixed with as much water as possible. . . . For both are works of God, and the mixing of the two, both of water and wine produces health, because life is composed of a necessary element and a useful element. To the necessary element, the water, which is in the greatest quantity, there is to be mixed in some of the useful element [*Instructor* II, ii, 23.3—24.1].

To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two martinis by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine, one would have to drink over twenty-two glasses. In other words, it is possible to become intoxicated from wine mixed with three parts of water, but one's drinking would probably affect the bladder long before it affected the mind.

In concluding this brief article I would like to emphasize two points. First, it is important to try to understand the biblical text in the context in which it was written. Before we ask "What does the biblical text mean for us today?" we must ask "What did it mean to them originally?" Second, there is a striking difference between the drinking of alcoholic beverages today and the drinking of wine in New Testament times. If the drinking of unmixed wine or even wine mixed in a ratio of one to one with water was frowned upon in ancient times, certainly the drinking of distilled spirits in which the alcoholic content is frequently three to ten times greater would be frowned upon a great deal more.

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A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking

Norman L. Geisler

The Bible makes it clear that God wants people to enjoy food and drink. For example, Ecclesiastes 9:7 says, "Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved of your works." God is not a cosmic killjoy nor a heavenly Scrooge, for He "richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). But does this mean that Christians can drink alcoholic beverages for enjoyment? Precisely at does the Bible say about the use of wine and the drinking of wine today?

What the Bible Teaches about Wine-Drinking

The Bible says several things about the use of wine.

DRUNKENNESS IS A SIN

Wine in the Bible was not to be used excessively, and one was not to become drunk with the fruit of the vine. In the Old Testament a drunkard was put to death (Deut. 21:20-21). Drunkenness was considered to be such an incorrigible sin that capital punishment was used for it as well as for murder, rape, blasphemy of parents, etc.

The Old Testament, it should be remembered, was a system of law. Christians are under grace, not law. But in both the Old and New Testaments God indicates that He hates drunkenness. According to 1 Corinthians 5:11, Christians are to separate

themselves from a person who claims to be a Christian but who is a drunkard. Drunkards "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10), nor will homosexuals or other kinds of sinners. Practicing homosexuals and drunkards do not inherit the kingdom of God. Obviously God hates drunkenness. Paul also wrote in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk with wine." And drunkenness is listed in Galatians 5:19-21 among "the deeds of the flesh."

STRONG DRINK IS DECEPTIVE AND SINFUL

The Bible says much about strong drink. For example, the priests were to avoid strong drink (Lev. 10:8-9). And Solomon wrote, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler" (Prov. 20:1). God is opposed to someone using strong drink because it brings deception and turbulence into his life. Rulers should not take strong drink, for it distorts their ability to think clearly and to judge clearly. Strong drink is not for kings lest they pervert justice (Prov. 31:4-5). Isaiah wrote, "Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink" (Isa. 5:11). This writer had an uncle who was drunk every day before noon his entire adult life. At about age forty he died of liver disease. He experienced the truth of Isaiah 24:9, "Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it." It may seem sweet to begin with, but it will be bitter in the end. It was the false prophet who said, "I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer" (Mic. 2:11, NIV). God is opposed to using strong drink as a beverage.¹ The Hebrew word for "strong drink" is שֶׁכָּר. It is used 23 times and refers to an intoxicating drink made from barley, pomegranates, dates, apples, or honey. The more common Old Testament word for "wine" is יַיִן, used 141 times. The word טִירוֹשׁ, on the other hand, occasionally translated "new wine," means the freshly pressed juice of the grape, that is, grape juice that has not yet fully fermented.² It is used 38 times (e.g., Gen. 27:28; Joel 2:24; Mic. 6:5).

DRINKING IN EXCESS IS WRONG

"Woe to you who are complacent in Zion. . . . You drink wine by the bowlful" (Amos 6:1, 6, NIV). Apparently cups were not large enough for those northern Israelites against whom Amos wrote. They drank so much that they had to drink from bowls. Overdrinking leads to sexual perversion (Hab. 2:15). Those who drink too much will sooner or later be involved in things such as the

prophet described here. King Xerxes and his servants overdrank (Esther 1:10), and this led to the sexual perversion and shameful acts in which Queen Vashti refused to participate.

In addition drinking in excess results in a slowing of the thinking processes (Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 28:7; Hos. 4:11); a stupor (Jer. 25:27; 51:39); sickness (Isa. 19:14; 28:7-8; Jer. 48:26); staggering (loss of balance and mental control) (Job 12:25; Isa. 28:7-8; 29:9); arrogance (Hab. 2:5); forgetfulness (Prov. 31:6-7); confusion and delirious dreams (Prov. 23:31, 33); sleepiness (Gen. 9:20-24; 19:33); lack of feeling (Prov. 23:31, 35); bloodshot eyes (Prov. 23:29-30); and poverty (Prov. 23:20-21).

CHURCH LEADERS ARE TO BE MODERATE

An elder is not to be addicted to wine, and a deacon is not to be given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3, 8). Obviously, if God had meant that they should drink no wine at all, He could have easily said that. These verses do not say that elders were not to have any wine. Clearly, church leaders in Paul's day were to be moderate in the use of wine.

WINE WAS USED AS A MEDICINE

In the Bible, alcoholic beverages were recommended for medicinal purposes. Paul told Timothy, "Use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1 Tim. 5:23, NIV). Timothy was told to take wine for his "stomach"³ because wine aids the digestive tract. In the ancient world wine was a kind of laxative. And today it is known that wine taken with a meal will help in the digestion of the food. Timothy apparently had some problems along this line, so Paul recommended that he use wine to aid his digestion.

"Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter" (Prov. 31:6). This indicates that strong drink was used as a sedative or pain-killer for the dying, and that wine was also used to calm the nerves of those who were deeply bereaved or in deep distress. Also wine would "refresh those who become exhausted in the desert" (2 Sam. 16:2, NIV).

The Good Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been beaten by thieves (Luke 10:34). Wine was used to cure, to help heal wounds. So wine had at least four medicinal purposes in the Bible. It is prescribed as a laxative, as a pain-killer, as a stimulant or refreshant, and as a curative for wounds.

What the Bible Does Not Teach about Alcohol

After examining what the Bible does teach about alcohol, one needs to consider next what the Bible does *not* teach about alcohol. A number of myths in the evangelical church should be put to rest.

THE BIBLE DOES NOT TEACH THAT NEW TESTAMENT COMMUNION WINE WAS UNFERMENTED⁴

Many well-meaning people would like to say that the New Testament communal wine was grape juice. But people did not know of Welch's grape juice in the New Testament. All wine was fermented wine; even "new wine" was fermented wine as will be shown in the next paragraph. Some Corinthians were drunk at the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:21). And for the cause of drunkenness God was bringing sickness to some Christians and some of them were dying. Drunkenness at the Lord's Supper was such an abuse that God took the lives of some of the saints in Corinth (11:30). But if they were drunk at communion, then the wine must have been fermented. This seems to be the most reasonable conclusion to draw from this passage.

THE BIBLE DOES NOT TEACH THAT NEW WINE WAS UNFERMENTED

Some have held that old wine is fermented but that "new wine" (טִירוֹשׁ) was always unfermented. But two passages clearly oppose this theory. Hosea 4:11 says both "old wine" (יָיִן) and "new wine" (טִירוֹשׁ) "take away the understanding." So even "new wine" can cause drunkenness.⁵ And in Acts 2:13 on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came on people and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the crowd said, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13, AV).⁶ So new wine in the Bible was just as fermented as old wine.

IT IS FALSE TO SAY THAT JESUS MADE UNFERMENTED WINE

As a matter of fact, He made wine that tasted so good the people at the wedding feast in Cana said it was better than the wine they had just drunk. Surely they would not have said this if it had tasted flat to them. In fact in John 2:9-10 it is called "wine" (οἶνος) and "good wine" (καλὸν οἶνον). These are the same words used for fermented wine elsewhere in the New Testament. (cf. Mark 2:22; Eph. 5:18).

IT IS INCORRECT TO SAY THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIANS WERE NOT TO USE WINE AT ANY TIME

That is not what the New Testament says, and in all honesty to the Scriptures, one should say precisely what the Scriptures teach on this topic. No verse states that Christians at that time should abstain from *all* wine at all times. As has been shown, the exhortations were against *strong* drink and *much* wine.

IT IS A MYTH TO SAY THAT TOTAL ABSTINENCE WAS A NEW TESTAMENT CONDITION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

New Testament churches did not have a "purity pledge" that included a prohibition against drinking or other practices. Nowhere does the New Testament say that not drinking any wine was a condition for church membership.

Is Wine Today like New Testament Wine?

Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. In fact today's wine is by biblical definitions "strong drink," and hence is forbidden in the Bible! What the Bible frequently meant by wine was basically purified water.

Stein researched wine-drinking in the ancient world, in Jewish sources, and in the Bible.⁷ He pointed out that wine in Homer's day was twenty parts water and one part wine (*Odyssey* 9.208-9). Pliny referred to wine as eight parts water and one part wine (*Natural History* 14.6.54). According to Aristophanes, it was stronger: three parts water and two parts wine. Other classical Greek writers spoke of other mixtures: Euenos — three parts water, one part wine; Hesiod — three to one, water to wine; Alexis — four to one; Diocles and Anacreon — two to one; and Ion — three to one. The average was about three or four parts of water to one part of wine.

Sometimes in the ancient world one part water would be mixed with one part wine; this was considered strong wine. And anyone who drank wine unmixed was looked on as a Scythian, a barbarian. That means the Greeks would say today, "You Americans are barbarians — drinking straight wine."

For example, Athenaeus quoted Mnesitheus of Athens as saying, "In daily intercourse, to those who drink it moderately it gives good cheer; but if you overstep the bounds it brings vio-

lence. Mix it half and half and you get madness; unmixed — bodily collapse.”⁸ Here is a pagan saying, “Half and half is madness, and unmixed wine brings death.”

Stein also observes that “in several instances in the Old Testament a distinction is made between ‘wine’ and ‘strong drink’” (e.g., Lev. 10:8-9). Strong drink is one thing, wine is another thing. The same distinction is made in Deuteronomy 14:26; 29:6; Judges 13:4; and elsewhere. According to the Talmud the “wine” used in the Passover meal was three parts water and one part wine (cf. 2 Macc. 15:39).⁹

It may also be that the wine Jesus miraculously provided at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11) was a similar drink, that is, wine mixed with water. The word *oīvos* (“wine”) refers sometimes to fermented grape juice (e.g., Eph. 5:18) and sometimes to fresh, not fully fermented grape juice (e.g., Rev. 19:15).

Furthermore, in ancient times not many beverages were safe to drink. Stein indicates that in the ancient world water could be made safe in one of several ways. It could be boiled, but this was tedious and costly. Or it could be filtered, but this was not a safe method. Or some wine could be put in the water to kill the germs — one part wine with three or four parts water.

Wine today has a much higher level of alcohol than wine in the New Testament. In fact in New Testament times one would need to drink twenty-two glasses of wine in order to consume the large amount of alcohol in two martinis today. Stein humorously notes, “In other words, it is possible to become intoxicated from wine mixed with three parts water, but one’s drinking would probably affect the bladder long before the mind.”¹⁰

Though fermented wine was drunk in Bible times and though the Bible approved of wine-drinking, one needs to remember that the alcoholic content was much less than that of wine today. What is used today is *not* the wine of the New Testament! Therefore Christians ought not drink wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages for they are actually “strong drink” and are forbidden in Scripture. Even ancient pagans did not drink what some Christians drink today!

Deciding about Wine-Drinking Today

How should one decide today whether or not to drink alcoholic beverages? Christians should carefully consider the following four questions.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Before a person decides to drink or to continue drinking, he should be fully aware of the following facts about alcoholic beverages and their effects today.¹¹

1. An estimated ten million problem drinkers or alcoholics are in the United States adult population.

2. Of adults who drink, 36 percent can be classed as problem drinkers.

3. In addition, an estimated 3.3 million young people ages 14-17 are problem drinkers.

4. Alcohol-related deaths may run as high as 200,000 per year. In two years' time there are as many alcoholic-related deaths as there were in the entire Vietnam War!

5. Alcohol abuse and alcoholism cost the United States about \$50 billion in 1975. That figure has risen considerably since then.

6. Between 1966 and 1975 the percent of high school students who said they had been drunk increased from 19 percent to 45 percent.

7. Alcohol is one cause of cancer.

8. Fetal alcohol syndrome is the third greatest cause of birth defects.

9. Evidence exists that social drinking impairs one's social and intellectual capacities. Rather than getting sharper, people who drink get duller.

10. Half of all traffic fatalities and one-third of all traffic injuries are alcohol-related. Whereas a person has the legal right to drink, he does not have the right to endanger the lives of others on the highway by his drinking.

11. A high percentage of child-abusing parents have drinking problems.

12. A relatively high correlation exists between alcohol consumption and robbery, rape, assault, homicide; and more than one-third of suicides involve alcohol.

13. Taxpayers pay \$11 to offset each \$1 paid in liquor revenue.¹²

WILL WINE-DRINKING LEAD TO SIN?

The Bible is not ambiguous about drunkenness. It is not unclear about overdrinking. It is not equivocal about strong

drink. But what does the Bible say about drinking *moderate* amounts of alcohol? First Corinthians 6:12 lays down a principle for borderline, questionable areas such as this. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable." So one must ask, Even if it is permissible, is it profitable?

The same verse adds, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." In view of this, one must ask, Am I the master of it, or is it the master of me? A person may think he is mastering his drinking, but if wine is something he *must* have, then it is mastering him.

WILL WINE-DRINKING LEAD ANYONE ELSE TO SIN?

Christians are to be concerned not only about their own lives but also about others. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:4, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others." And Christians should seriously consider Romans 14:21: "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles." A believer should ask himself, "Will my drinking cause anyone else to sin? Even if it would not be a problem to me, is it possible that it would cause someone else to stumble?" This writer knows of former alcoholics who have attended church communion services in which fermented wine has been served, and just the taste of a little bit of it drove them back into alcoholism.

CAN WINE-DRINKING BE DONE TO THE GLORY OF GOD?

Paul wrote, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). If a Christian cannot be praising God and glorifying Him while he is drinking, then it is not good for him, and it is not glorifying to God.

Why Christians Need Not Drink Wine

Several reasons may be offered as to why Christians ought to refrain from wine-drinking. First, people in the United States have plenty of wholesome, nonaddictive beverages. The situation today is unlike biblical times when there were not many wholesome beverages. People often did not have good water available; it was often polluted. Travelers today know that in many foreign countries pure drinking water is difficult to obtain. In many foreign places, travelers become sick from drinking the water. This is similar to biblical times.

Thus it is wrong to argue that since people in Bible times drank wine, Christians today can do the same. Properly speaking, people then drank purified water. New Testament wine was basically a water-purification method. It was not an unsafe liquor; it was a safe liquid. But in America purifying water with wine is unnecessary, and plenty of nonaddictive beverages are available.

Second, America is an alcoholic culture, but the New Testament culture was not. Ten million Americans are alcoholics, with more than three million of them teenagers. In New Testament times, there were comparatively few drunks, and alcohol was not a problem in their culture to the extent it is in this nation.

Third, total abstinence is the safer policy. A person cannot abuse drinking if he does not drink. In *Christianity Today* a few years ago, a writer asked, "How many people would fly if they knew there was a chance of one in ten that the plane would crash?"¹³ The chances of airplanes crashing are certainly not that high — far from it; but if they were, undoubtedly many people would refuse ever to board another plane. And yet the chances of an occasional or moderate drinker becoming an alcoholic are in fact one in ten!

Fourth, total abstinence is the more consistent policy. A few years ago when the drug culture became so dominant and people became so concerned about young people's use of marijuana, heroin, and harder drugs, the government studied the problem of drug abuse. The results chagrined many adults: The number-one problem in the United States is alcohol! It is not marijuana, nor heroin, nor LSD, but alcohol — the "establishment" drug, the adults' drug, the legal drug. This in no way suggests that marijuana or other illegal drugs should be approved. But young people look at adults and say, "Hypocrites! You approve of your drug, and it's the biggest one in the country, and you disapprove of our drugs." And therefore it is difficult to win young people from drugs; they see the sheer hypocrisy of many adults.

Since today's society is alcohol-polluted, this writer suggests that Christians take a strong stand against all alcoholic beverages. This writer would like to suggest that Christians, in a Nazaritelike vow, should protest the destructive effects of alcoholism and should voluntarily abstain from all alcohol consumption. Of course such abstinence in itself does not make a Christian more spiritual, nor is it because the Bible says that wine should never be taken by anyone for any purpose. He is voluntari-

ly protesting against the abuse of alcohol in American society, and is calling on all Christians to join in that protest.

The main reason people drink wine is that it provides relaxation and enjoyment. Does abstinence, then, suggest that God is a cosmic killjoy? Is He against peace and enjoyment? By no means. However, He wants people to have genuine peace and real joy — the peace of God and the joy of Christ. In this regard, the Bible says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18, NIV). God wants Christians to have peace without going to pieces. David said, "Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever" (Ps. 16:11). It is a shameful testimony for a believer in Christ to resort to alcohol in order to relax, when the "peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7, NKJB) is available to him. And it is an insult to the Holy Spirit for Christians to seek the superficial pleasure of stimulants when they can have the permanent joy of the Holy Spirit. God wants people to eat and drink with joy, but without jeopardy. He desires that man's pleasures be Spirit-directed, not self-centered; that they be helpful, but not harmful.

Notes

1 The passage in Deuteronomy 14:26 which appears to commend buying "strong drink" (שִׁכָּר) cannot be used as a divine approval for drinking it for three reasons. First, the Old Testament clearly condemns drinking "strong drink," as the above passage indicates. Therefore this isolated and unclear passage must be understood in harmony with the clear Old Testament teaching against "strong drink." Second, the passage does not say they should *drink* it but only that they should *buy* it. Third, "strong drink" was used for medicinal purposes, so the commendation here is probably to buy medicine (see Prov. 31:6).

2 Schultz correctly notes, "It is a specific reference to comparatively fresh grape juice which was not fully aged. References to *tirōsh* indicate that when incontinently used it was intoxicating. Hosea 4:11 says both 'yāyīn and *tirōsh* take away the understanding' (cf. Judges 9:13, Acts 2:13)" (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Wine and Strong Drink," by A. C. Schultz, 5:935).

3 "Stomach" (στόμαχος) is not limited to the bodily organ presently given that name, it refers instead to the digestive system. It had a broad usage in New Testament times. Also the word στόμαχος was used to describe emotions such as "vexation" and "anger" (James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980], p. 592).

4 The argument of some that the Passover (and hence communion) wine was unfermented seems unfounded (see William Patton, *Bible Wines or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients* [1811, reprinted, Oklahoma City: Sane Press, 1975]). Patton argued that since all leaven was forbidden in the Passover (Lev. 2:13-14) and since fermentation is a form of leavening, it follows that Passover wine was not fermented (p. 83). This argument seems weak for several reasons.

(a) Fermented wine or drink is not mentioned among those things covered by "leaven." Leaven referred only to *foods*. (b) Even the word for "new wine" in the Old Testament refers to what is fermented (see n. 2 above). (c) Jewish tradition as described in 2 Maccabees 15:39 indicates that fermented juice mixed with water was used in the Passover. (d) Some believers in Corinth were drunk at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:21). They were definitely not using Welch's grape juice!

5 See note 1 above on the fermented nature of "new wine." It seems obvious, however, from Jesus' reference to the bursting of wineskins by new wine (Mark 2:22) that it was in the active process of fermentation. As Schultz has noted, "Usually the new wine was left in the vat to undergo the first fermentation which took from four to seven days. It was then drawn off (Hag. 2:16, lit. baled out). If the vat had a spout the wine was run off into jars or wineskins to complete the process of fermentation (Matt. 9:17). The whole period of fermentation would last from two to four months when the wine would be ready for use" (Schultz, "Wine and Strong Drink," p. 938).

6 The New Testament word for *new wine* is γλεῦκος, meaning "sweet wine." And it is obvious from the usage in Acts 2:13 that even it could make one drunk. The other word for wine in the New Testament is οἶνος. It is used in the phrase "new wine" in Mark 2:22 as well as in the "winepress" reference in Revelation 19:15. It is also the Greek term used to translate "new wine" (יין) in Hosea 4:11. This usage would seem to support the fact that even "new wine" (whether יין or γλεῦκος or οἶνος νέος) can and does mean fermented wine.

7 See the excellent article by Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today*, June 20, 1975, pp. 9-11.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

9 The reference in Isaiah 1:22 to diluted wine as bad should be taken not as a proof that Jews did not mix wine (see 2 Macc. 15:39), but as a metaphor of spiritual adulteration (cf. Isa. 1:21).

10 Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," p. 11.

11 Unless otherwise noted, statistics are taken from an editorial, "A Plea for Total Abstinence," in *The Evangelical Beacon*, November 13, 1979, p. 12.

12 Reported by Horace E. Chandler, "Let's Unmask John Barleycorn," *Christianity Today*, April 15, 1966, p. 15.

13 *Christianity Today*, November 18, 1977, p. 24.



June 18, 2014

Hi J. Howard,

It's not as bad as it appears. 99.7% of the programs we now carry (and all of the ones you listed) will continue to be aired in their same time slots as we have different ways to receive those.

Moody Bible Institute has long-held a policy that required faculty, staff and volunteers to abstain from drinking, smoking and gambling. This policy is in line with that of WAGP and it's parent company Community Broadcasting Inc. We believe that, regardless of various interpretations of Scripture in these areas, that people in ministry are called to a higher standard.

Last October the administration of Moody Bible Institute under the direction of President Paul Nyquist abandoned that policy. We feel this is a grave mistake. Aside from potentially causing people to stumble, e.g. students who look up to their professors and see them using alcohol may feel the liberty to do the same themselves. In addition, to lower the bar in these areas creates the potential for doing the same in other areas.

WAGP reached out to Moody and asked them to reconsider their policy decision, but to date they have not. As such, we cannot in good conscience continue to endorse the Moody Broadcasting Network. We have been playing Moody promotional spots at :54 minutes past the hour on hours we carry Moody-produced programming. We will no longer be doing this; and this will be the biggest change you notice. We may also drop some call-in programs heard on Saturday morning following the kids programming. And there may be some changes in the music that we carry. But, by and large, you should not feel that this is a crisis, rather a point of obedience on our part.

Blessings,
Rick