

**Alcohol
and
the
Church**

Eric Adams

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1

Introduction

The use of alcohol among Christians is one of the more controversial issues of the last two centuries, particularly within American churches. Three main positions were forged:

Prohibition

Prohibitionists hold that Scripture strictly forbids Christians from consuming wine and alcohol. Thus, the use of alcohol is a sin.

Abstention

Abstentionists argue that Scripture does not explicitly forbid the consumption of wine and alcohol. However, Christians should refrain from most uses of alcohol.

Moderation

Moderationists teach that Scripture endorses the enjoyment of alcohol as a good gift from God. Moderate use of alcohol is permissible; drunkenness is not.

In this study, we will argue for the moderation view while exploring two core issues: alcohol in the Bible and alcohol in recent church history.

2

Alcohol Content of Wine in the Bible

Those who oppose the Christian use of alcohol often argue that the alcohol content of wine in Bible plays an essential role in determining whether the use of alcohol is permissible for Christians.

Two Kinds of Wine in the Bible?

The Scriptures mention “wine” over two hundred times, both in positive and negative contexts. Some Christians have used this positive/negative distinction to argue that the Bible is speaking of two different kinds of wine.

When the Bible speaks positively of wine, then this is referring to “wine” as non-alcoholic grape juice. When the Bible speaks negatively of wine, then this is referring to “wine” as alcoholic wine.

This argument was very popular among prohibitionists, particularly those that led the Temperance Movement. The advantage of this position is that it seems as though one is able to account for all of the Scriptures.

Explanation

However, the alleged distinction between alcoholic wine and non-alcoholic grape juice does not exist in the Bible. The Bible uses the same word for wine in both positive and negative aspects.

The positive/negative distinction has to do with the *use/abuse* of alcohol. When the Bible speaks positively of wine, this is referring to the moderate use of alcohol.

When the Bible speaks negatively of wine, this is referring to the abuse of alcohol, or drunkenness.

Was Wine Heavily Diluted?

Some Christians maintain that the wine in the Bible was almost non-alcoholic. It is argued that all wine in ancient times was filtered and dried into a paste, which was then mixed with water. Thus, small amounts of alcohol were present in wine, but the wine was so diluted as to minimize the intoxicating effects. The alcohol that was used was strictly for preservation purposes.

According to this view, the Bible does not prohibit the use of wine, provided we understand wine to be heavily diluted so that it was basically grape juice with only enough alcohol to preserve the grape juice from spoiling.

In our day, we have purified water, pasteurized grape juice, and refrigeration. There is no need to rely upon alcohol as a preservative. Thus, Christians should abstain from beverages that have a significant alcohol content, which would include all of our modern beers, wines, and liquors. This is the argument of many abstentionists.

Explanation

This particular abstentionist argument demands that all wine was heavily diluted. While dilution was certainly used in some circumstances, this was far from the universal practice. The Biblical admonitions against drunkenness should suffice to prove that not everyone was diluting. Obviously, at least some people were getting a hold of the real thing and becoming drunk. If all “wine” was so low in alcohol content, then one would have to consume gallons and gallons to get drunk.

Moreover, this low-alcohol content argument has no support in historical scholarship. Virtually every scholar agrees that the alcohol content of wine during Biblical times was usually between 5-20%, which is enough to intoxicate.

Ironically, one popular abstentionist argues that the burden of proof should fall on those who claim that Biblical wine contained alcohol. This bold claim is precisely the opposite of reality. The burden of proof *always* falls on those who are against the consensus of historical scholarship. Such abstentionists have failed to prove that dilution was the universal practice.

Furthermore, many Biblical texts become silly or meaningless if they refer to non-alcoholic grape juice. Would the Shulamite have said to Solomon, “Your love is better than grape juice” (Song of Songs 1:2)?

If wine was super-diluted, why did the good Samaritan pour grape juice on the wounds of the man going to Jericho (Luke 10:34)? Why did Paul counsel Timothy to drink a little grape juice for his stomach (1 Timothy 5:23)?

If wine was basically grape juice, then the weaker brother argument is pointless (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8). Why would anyone object to the consumption of grape juice? No one’s faith is threatened by grace juice.

The wine of the Bible had to have been alcoholic. Alcohol can intoxicate, clean wounds, and heal stomach troubles. Grape juice does none of these things.

Is Alcohol Sinful?

Those who argue that some or all of the wine in the Bible was non-alcoholic or low-alcoholic are operating from a presupposition: alcohol is sinful. Both prohibitionists and abstentionists read the Scriptures through this presupposition.

However, material things are not sinful. Sin does not reside in objects, but in the human heart. Sin comes from the misuse of God's gifts, not the godly use of God's gifts. As we will see in the next chapter, alcohol is a gift from God. There is a godly and moderate use of alcohol.

3

Alcohol in the Old Testament

Wrong Uses of Wine

All Christians agree that drunkenness is a sin. The Bible is replete with commands and warnings against the abuse of alcohol.

Do not mix with *winebibbers*,
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;
For the *drunkard* and the glutton will come to poverty
(Proverbs 23:20-21).

Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
That they may follow *intoxicating* drink;
Who continue until night, till *wine* inflames them!
(Isaiah 5:11).

Woe to men mighty at drinking *wine*,
Woe to men valiant for mixing *intoxicating* drink
(Isaiah 5:22).

Many other passages condemn drunkenness. Prohibitionists, abstentionists, and moderationists all agree that drunkenness is a sin.

The Godly Use of Wine

Yet, the condemnation of the abuse of wine does not entail a condemnation of all uses of wine. Rather, God says many positive things about wine. Most who oppose the Christian use of wine do not reckon with how the Bible endorses the proper use of alcohol.

Wine is a Gift of God

The Psalmist sings that God wants us to enjoy wine.

He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the service of man,
That he may bring forth food from the earth,
And *wine* that makes glad the heart of man,
Oil to make his face shine,
And bread which strengthens man's heart.
(Psalm 104:14-15).

This is one of the most positive statements about wine that God has made. Just as God provides the conditions that allow man to cultivate food and oil, so God provides the conditions that allow man to produce wine. Wine is a gift from God to man.

Notice, too, that wine is given to make our hearts glad. It is virtuous, godly, and righteous to enjoy the warmth that a glass of wine gives. Feeling some of the effects of alcohol is not the same as drunkenness.

Those who argue against the righteous use of wine are rejecting one of God's good gifts. This passage alone ought to be enough to cause abstentionists to pause. If we take God's word literally, then we will not shrink from believing this passage. Alcohol is a gift from God.

Wine is a Gift to God

God commands wine to be given as an offering to himself.

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar ... with the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-

fourth of a hin of *wine* [approximately one quart] as a drink offering (Exodus 29:38-40).

Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of *wine*, one-fourth of a hin [one quart] (Leviticus 23:13).

And one-fourth of a hin of *wine* as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb ... and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of *wine* as a sweet aroma to Yahweh ... and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of *wine* [two quarts] as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to Yahweh (Numbers 15:5, 7, 10).

God demands that nothing unclean or unholy can ever to be offered to him. Yet, God also commands Israel to regularly include wine in their offerings. Therefore, it is impossible that wine is inherently unclean or unholy. God was pleased when Israel gave wine to him as a gift.

Look at what God also commanded as an offering:

And its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy place you shall pour out the *strong drink* to Yahweh as an offering (Numbers 28:7).

God commands not only wine, but also strong drink as an offering. Again, it is inconceivable that God would allow something sinful to be poured out on his holy altar. God was pleased to receive alcohol from Israel as an offering.

Wine is a Blessing

Isaac blessed Jacob, praying for plenty of wine:

Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,
And *plenty of grain and wine*.
(Genesis 27:28).

Throughout Israel's history, God promised an abundance of wine for faithful obedience:

Honor Yahweh with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And *your vats will overflow with new wine*.
(Proverbs 3:9).

Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new *wine* and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you (Deuteronomy 7:12-13).

As a reward for faithful obedience, God also commanded Israel to purchase not only wine, but also strong drink, which was even more alcoholic than wine.

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for *wine* or *strong*

drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before Yahweh your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household (Deuteronomy 14:26).

The abundance of wine and strong drink is a sign of godliness and blessing. Indeed, God promised an abundance of wine for those returning from exile:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says Yahweh,
“When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
*The mountains shall drip with sweet wine,
And all the hills shall flow with it.*
I will bring back the captives of My people Israel;
They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them
(Amos 9:13-14).

Wine is also part of the great eschatological feast:

And in this mountain Yahweh of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of *wines* on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined *wines* on the lees (Isaiah 25:6).

An abundance of wine is one of the signs of blessing that God graciously promised throughout Scripture. God would never tell his people that wine is a blessing, if it were actually a curse or sinful or foolish.

The Absence of Wine

The absence of wine is always regarded negatively, as a sign of the absence of God. For example, God threatens to curse Israel by preventing them from drinking their wine:

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you ... You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but *you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes*; for the worms shall eat them (Deuteronomy 28:15, 39).

As a further curse, God threatened that foreigners would drink Israel's wine:

Yahweh has sworn by His right hand And by the arm of His strength: "Surely I will no longer give your grain As food for your enemies; And the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new *wine*, For which you have labored (Isaiah 62:8).

Just as God promises an abundance of wine as a blessing for faithfulness, so God also promises the removal of wine as a curse for unfaithfulness.

In Scripture, prohibition is a curse, the result of disobedience. Those who object to the use of wine on the grounds that it is inherently evil, and that its use is sinful, should pause to consider the fact that they are declaring to be a curse that which God has declared to be a blessing, and a blessing that which God has declared to be a curse. This is a grievous error.

Wine is a Symbol of the Gospel

Isaiah uses wine as a symbol of the gospel:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes,

come, buy *wine* and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

It would incongruous for God to use wine as a symbol of the gospel and yet prohibit his people from enjoying it. The consistent testimony of the Old Testament is that wine is a gift and a blessing and is to be enjoyed by God's people.

4

Alcohol in the New Testament

Jesus, Peter, and Paul condemn drunkenness and the abuse of alcohol.

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, *drunkenness*, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly (Luke 21:34).

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, *drunkenness*, revelries, *drinking parties*, and abominable idolatries (1 Peter 4:3).

And do not be *drunk* with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

The abuse of wine and drunkenness are explicitly condemned in the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament. However, one never finds any hint that the godly use of wine is prohibited.

Jesus Drank Alcohol

Jesus drank enough wine that some people accused him of being a drunkard:

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man has come eating and *drinking*, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a *winebibber* [drunkard], a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:33-34).

Jesus is drawing a parallel between himself and John the Baptist. The Jewish leaders condemned John for being an ascetic, for not eating bread and for not drinking wine.

Jesus was condemned for the exact opposite, for eating much bread and for drinking much wine. Jesus shocked the Jewish leaders by not only befriending sinners, but also by eating and drinking alcohol with them.

This passage ought to give pause to those who argue that we should abstain from alcohol for the sake of avoiding “any appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Jesus never sinned. He avoided all appearances of evil, yet he also drank alcohol. Let us not try to be holier than Jesus.

Jesus Made Alcohol

Jesus’ first miracle was to turn water into wine, creating 120-180 gallons of wine. This not “new wine,” but fine-aged wine:

And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the *good wine* until now!” (John 2:10).

Jesus’ first miracle not only testified to his deity, but it also announced the return from exile. Remember that throughout the Old Testament, the abundance of wine is a symbol of blessing. By creating a massive amount of wine, Jesus provided a vivid picture of the return of blessing. The kingdom of God was being established, and Jesus’ first miracle proclaimed this fact. There is wine! There is much wine! There is much fine-aged wine! Ho! Everyone who thirsts! Come! This miracle was an

announcement and an invitation into the kingdom of God.

Wine and the Lord's Supper

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he says that the cup symbolically represents his blood:

Then He took the *cup*, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27-28)

Notice that the contents of the cup are not in doubt:

But I say to you, I will not drink of this *fruit of the vine* from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:27-29)

The cup contained the "fruit of the vine," which is an obvious reference to wine. Some prohibitionists and abstentionists argue that this was non-alcoholic grape juice. While this may seem possible, no scholar takes this claim seriously.

Furthermore, the early church used wine in their celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is *drunk*. What! Do you not have houses to eat and *drink* in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you (1 Corinthians 11:20-22).

Paul berates the Corinthians for getting drunk while celebrating the Lord's Supper. Notice, though, that Paul does not tell them to remove the alcohol from the Lord's Supper. He condemns them for abusing alcohol, not for the mere use of alcohol.

As Jesus, his disciples, and the apostolic church all used wine in the Lord's Supper, so we ought also to use wine in our celebration of the Lord's Supper. If we remove wine from the Lord's Supper, then we are removing a sign of blessing.

The communion cup is supposed to be a cup of blessing:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16).

In the Bible, prohibition is a curse. The church that prohibits wine from the communion cup is self-imposing a curse upon what is supposed to be a blessing.

5

Alcohol and Common Objections

Despite the Biblical evidence that wine is a gift of God and a blessing to be enjoyed, many are still opposed to the Christian use of alcohol. In this chapter, we will examine a few of popular arguments for abstention.

The Weaker Brother

Many argue for abstention out of concern for the weaker brother, based upon Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. This is an important issue that ought to be seriously considered by all who claim to love the brethren.

Paul writes that those who are mature ought to be careful not to cause weaker brothers to stumble into sin:

But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak (1 Corinthians 8:9).

Paul even mentions wine specifically:

It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles (Romans 14:21).

The primary teaching of these passages is that we should put love for our brothers in Christ ahead of some concern for our “rights.” If that means voluntarily abstaining from the public use of some food or drink when a brother with

a sensitive weaker conscience is present, we should not object.

The weaker brother argument is a legitimate concern and a legitimate reason for voluntarily abstaining from the public use of alcohol in certain situations. However, two caveats are required.

The Weaker Brother and the Lord's Supper

First, the weaker brother argument does not affect the use of wine in the Lord's Supper. There were alcoholics in the early church, yet this did not stop the apostles from using alcohol in the Lord's Supper.

More importantly, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with wine. Those who advocate removing wine from the Lord's Supper are implicitly condemning Jesus.

Jesus loves his church far more than we do. He instituted the Lord's Supper with wine. We ought to assume that Jesus knew what he was doing. Woe to those who attempt to be smarter than Jesus.

Weaker Brother or Legalist?

Second, we must distinguish between the weaker brother and the legalist. Although these two categories of people look similar, they are miles apart, and are to be treated differently.

Paul portrays the weaker brother as one who has a weak and sensitive conscience. The weaker brother is probably new in the faith; he is not confident about what to do in every situation. He is not sure if certain things are Biblical or unbiblical. He is impressionable and tempted to copy another Christians' behavior, even in violation of his own conscience.

We should love such weaker brothers so much that we are willing to give up our own liberties so that we do not cause them to violate their consciences. This may mean abstaining from the consumption of alcohol in certain situations.

However, the legalist is not the same as the weaker brother. The legalist is arrogant and unteachable. He has appointed himself as judge. His conscience is not weak, but cold and hardened. Unlike a weaker brother, the legalist is confident that he knows exactly what is right and wrong in at all times.

While the weaker brother is tempted to imitate an action even though he thinks it might be wrong, the legalist would never violate his conscience. Whereas the weaker brother's conscience may be wounded by seeing mature Christians drink alcohol, the legalist's conscience is offended. Herein lies the crucial difference.

So, what is the church's response to the weaker brother? The church has the responsibility to help the weaker brother to grow into maturity. The church is to instruct him, rather than coddle him and allow him to remain a spiritual infant forever.

What is the church's response to the legalist? The church should not be afraid of offending the legalist. Jesus went out of his way to offend legalists.

Additionally, the church has the responsibility to confront the legalist on his sin of substituting a man-made standard for the word of God. To add to or subtract from the word of God is an abomination.

Summary

The weaker brother should be a legitimate concern for moderationists. We should not hesitate to give up our liberty for immature believers.

However, concern for the weaker brother cannot be stretched into a universal principle of abstention. The weaker brother applies to specific situations, not all situations.

Even abstentionists know this, as they eat meat without giving much thought to the weaker brother. Paul says that we should be willing to give up both drinking wine and eating meat for the sake of the weaker brother (Romans 14:21). Abstentionists who eat meat are inconsistent; they ought to be teetotalers and vegetarians.

Defiling the Temple of the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament, the priests were not allowed to drink alcohol when they were serving in the temple. Many well-meaning Christians argue that we should likewise refrain from consuming alcohol because we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit:

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19).

We do not want to defile our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. However, this passage has nothing to do with alcohol. The context of 1 Corinthians 6 is sexual immorality, as seen in immediately preceding verse 19:

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Sexual immorality defiles our bodies; the consumption of alcohol does not. Jesus drank wine while the Holy Spirit was dwelling in him. He was not defiled.

Jesus even stated that we cannot be defiled by what we eat or drink:

Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (Matthew 15:17-19).

Sin comes from our hearts, not from consuming alcohol in moderation.

Fencing our Liberties

Most of the popular arguments against the consumption of alcohol are motivated by wanting to eliminate its abuse. This is certainly a worthy goal, but the means employed are often inconsistent with how we handle other sins.

For example, compare alcohol with food or sex. God created both food and sex our enjoyment. However, our enjoyment must be confined to God-ordained parameters.

Food is fine when enjoyed in moderation. However, over-eating is the sin of gluttony.

Sex is fine when enjoyed within marriage. However, sex outside of marriage is the sin of immorality.

Likewise, alcohol is fine when enjoyed in moderation. However, a large quantity of alcohol produces the sin of drunkenness.

With food, sex, and alcohol, there is both a godly use and an ungodly use. Unfortunately, the abuse of this triad is rampant in our society. Gluttony, immorality, and drunkenness are all widespread sins.

Yet, does anyone argue for the prohibition of food or sex? Does anyone call for Christians to abstain from food or sex in order to prevent gluttony and immorality?

Of course not. These are good gifts that are to be enjoyed in their proper contexts: food in moderation, and sex within marriage. Why, then, is alcohol treated differently?

Martin Luther said it best, “Do not suppose that abuses are eliminated by destroying the object which is abused. Men can go wrong with wine and women. Shall we then prohibit and abolish women?”

Sin comes from our hearts, not from food or sex or alcohol. Sin cannot be controlled by external rules. In fact, God says that external controls have zero impact on our flesh:

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the

world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of *no value* against the indulgence of the flesh (Colossians 2:20-23).

Man-made regulations are of no value against our flesh. Abstaining from alcohol has no effect on the desires of our heart. Prohibition may suppress some instances of drunkenness, but it does not keep us from sinning. In fact, external regulations only increase our sinful desires.

Conclusion

Each of these three objections largely ignore the copious Biblical evidence that alcohol is a gift from God to be enjoyed in moderation. Unfortunately, most who argue against the Christian use of alcohol are unwittingly more influenced by the Temperance Movement than the teaching of the Scriptures.

6

Alcohol in Recent Church History

The abuse of alcohol was a problem in the early frontier years of America. Of course, drunkenness has always been and will always be a problem until the Lord returns.

The Temperance Movement

Preaching against drunkenness is nothing new, but in the late eighteenth century, preachers began to focus their preaching against alcohol itself. Alcohol was a great evil that need to be abolished. This kind of preaching spawned the Temperance Movement.

Ironically, temperance means “moderation” or “self-restraint.” Yet the goal of the Temperance Movement was not temperance or moderation, but the total prohibition from all alcoholic beverages.

Several states banned alcohol by the mid-nineteenth century. After the Civil War, the national Prohibition Party was formed, whose sole goal was the prohibition of alcohol.

Soon after, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union was started. This organization was well known for such stunts as marching into saloons singing songs like, “Lips that Touch Liquor Shall Never Touch Mine.”

In 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution of the United States of America. This prohibited the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.

Of course, making alcohol illegal did not eliminate its abuse. The roaring twenties were one of the most debauched decades in American History. Although alcohol was prohibited, it did not stop people from getting drunk. It did not stop people from sinning.

In fact, people now had license to be creative about their sin. Bathtub gin, moonshine, and other illegal distilleries were prominent. Not only this, but organized crime got its major start in America by making, selling, and transporting liquor.

In 1933 the twenty-first Amendment was ratified, which repealed the eighteenth Amendment of Prohibition.

Of course, today, the abuse of alcohol is still a rampant problem. Most would agree that Prohibition and the Temperance Movement had the opposite effect of its intention. Sin actually increased when alcohol was prohibited.

Prohibition and the Church

More than that, the Temperance Movement has had a profoundly debilitating impact upon the church in America.

The Temperance Movement united both theological liberals and theological conservatives. Theological liberals denied doctrines such as inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, etc. Theological conservatives affirmed all of these doctrines.

Theological liberals and theological conservatives were opposed on nearly every issue. However, when it came to the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, these two factions

put aside their theological differences and joined in opposing all alcoholic beverages. In other words, they considered alcohol to be a greater evil than false doctrine.

The results of this unholy alliance are notorious. During the years of Prohibition, the theological liberals were busy taking over every mainline denomination.

In 1924, the Auburn Affirmation was signed, which allowed Presbyterian ministers to deny the fundamentals of the faith, yet still retain their ordination.

Of course, theological liberals did not just appear in 1919, but they gradually infiltrated the church during the nineteenth century. While the church was consumed with warring against alcohol, the theological liberals were allowed to come in and take over the denominations.

This is the legacy of the Temperance Movement. Not only did it fail to slow or even curb alcohol abuse, but the Temperance Movement was one of the distractions that allowed false doctrines and false teachers to creep into the church.

The church was right to preach against drunkenness, but wrong to preach against alcohol. Ignorance of the Biblical teaching on alcohol contributed to downgrade of the American church.

Yet, this ignorance continues today. Prohibition and abstention are still trumpeted as the answer to the problem of drunkenness. Alcohol is blamed, rather than sinful hearts.

American Exile

For the first 1800 years after Christ's death and resurrection, the church has unanimously used wine in communion. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists all used wine in celebrating the Lord's Supper.

All of the creeds that name the elements of the Lord's Supper specify wine, not grape juice (Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism, Baptist Confession of 1689).

All of this changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because of the Temperance Movement. American churches discarded wine in favor of non-alcoholic grape juice.

In a sense, the American church has exiled herself. She has thrown out the wine, and thus, thrown out something that God has deemed good and a symbol of blessing.

It is fitting that most American churches serve grape juice. As a society, we have rejected God, and now we suffer the curses of breaking covenant – the blessing of wine has been taken away. Our gospel is inert, just like our grape juice offered in communion.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. God has declared that wine is a picture of this powerful gospel. Let us not reject the blessing of God.

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy *wine* and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).