



Glasgow RPCS Magazine



MAY 2018

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Worship Services:

Lord's Day Morning: 11am
 Lord's Day Evening: 6pm
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 7.30pm
 Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Upcoming Lord's Supper:

Preparatory Services: 18th and 19th May
 @ 7.30pm
 Prayer Meeting: 20th May @ 10am
 Lord's Day Services: 20th May @ 11am
 and 6pm

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Minister's Article

The Bible, Alcohol and the Lord's Supper (Part 2)

Last month, we began to consider why we use real wine in communion – unlike a significant number of churches which now use unfermented grape juice or some other drink.

To set this issue in its wider context, we began by considering what the Bible has to say about wine and alcoholic drinks in general. It is important to do this because, although all Christians acknowledge that drunkenness is a sin ('Do not be drunk with wine' Eph. 5:18 – see also Proverbs 23:20; Isaiah 5:11), and a sin which breeds untold misery in the life of the drunkard as well as those around him, not all Christians agree as to whether there is such a thing as a lawful use of alcoholic drinks.

As we saw, there are three viewpoints held regarding this matter.

First, there is the *prohibitionist* view. The prohibitionist believes that the Bible prohibits the use of alcoholic drinks.

Second, there is the *abstentionist* view. The abstentionist acknowledges that the Bible does not prohibit the use of alcoholic drinks but believes, on Biblical grounds, that it is wise for him – and possibly for others – to refrain from their use.

Third, there is the *moderationist* view. The moderationist believes that the Bible allows, and indeed commends, the use of alcoholic drinks in moderation.

Not surprisingly, the view held on this particular issue affects the way in which churches hold the Lord's Supper and, since the rise of the temperance movement in the late 19th century, a good number of churches have moved away from using fermented (alcoholic) wine at the Lord's Supper and have used grape juice or some other alternative instead.

As reformed Christians, our source of authority is, of course, the Bible and to resolve this issue, we must always turn to it to hear what it says. Last month, we looked at the evidence of the Old Testament. This month, we will consider the evidence of the New Testament.

Evidence from the New Testament

The following words, or descriptive terms, are used in the New Testament for drinks which appear to involve alcohol.

Oinos (wine): This is the most common word for wine in the New Testament and is used over thirty times. Before looking at examples of this usage, it is worth noting that when the Jews translated the Old Testament into Greek many years before the birth of Christ (a translation known as the 'Septuagint') they used this word for *all of the Hebrew words which we saw above referring to intoxicating drinks*. However, significantly, they did not use this word to translate the Hebrew word 'mishrah' – the only Hebrew word for unfermented grape juice.

In turning to the New Testament itself, Paul warns against being drunk with this wine (Ephesians 5:18). Clearly, then, this wine (oinos) possessed the power of intoxication.

In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul warns Elders against *lingering a long time beside* their wine. This is plainly a prohibition against drinking too much wine. Again, the implication is that the wine must have been alcoholic in content.

Similarly, in 1 Timothy 3:8 where the prohibition is against drinking 'much' wine – rather than not drinking wine at all – the understanding is that the grape juice is fermented.

These three pieces of evidence from the word of God clearly teach that the wine referred to by the term 'oinos' was fermented wine – which we would expect from the use of the word 'oinos' in the Septuagint.

Surprisingly, perhaps, most of the references to wine (oinos) in the New Testament have a connection with Christ and it is worth drawing special attention to these. Three situations demand our attention.

First, it is well known that Christ was (falsely) accused of being a 'glutton' and a 'winebibber' – that is, one who drinks wine to excess: 'oinopotes' – note the appearance of 'oinos' in *oinopotes* (Matthew 11:18, 19). The charge was not that he drank wine (oinos) but that he drank it to excess. Of course, the charge was blasphemous but it is difficult under the circumstances, in which Christ was eating and drinking with sinners, to see how this charge could make any sense at all if Christ was only drinking grape juice.

Second, it is also well known that Christ created wine (oinos) to be served at a wedding feast in Galilee. After tasting the wine which the Lord had created, the master of the feast told the bridegroom that it was the custom to give the guests 'the good wine first' and to give the inferior wine when the guests have 'well drunk' – literally, 'when they become drunk'. It is important to note that the Greek word for 'drunk' (*methuo*) is used without exception in the New Testament to refer to someone under the power of alcohol (Matthew 24:49; Acts 2:15; 1 Corinthians 11:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:7; Revelation 17:2, 6). It is obvious that the Master of the feast is referring to the fact that when people have drunk to excess, they are unable to distinguish clearly between good wine and poor wine. Although such drinking to excess is sinful, the point being made is that Christ had served up a quality of wine which would normally be served first – that is, good quality alcoholic wine.

It is clear, then, that 'the good wine' (oinos) which Christ created had the capacity to intoxicate. Of course, this does not mean that Christ approves of drunkenness but it does mean that he is giving His approval to the lawful use of alcoholic drinks in social contexts.

The third incident from the life of Christ has special connection with the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18) and introduces another expression for wine – the 'fruit of the vine'. This merits more extended discussion.

Those who oppose the use of alcohol generally, and especially at the Lord's Table, assert that this phrase must refer to unfermented grape juice – because the fruit of the vine, in its natural state, is unfermented. However, 'fruit of the vine' is in fact a figurative expression for wine – as the following evidence shows.

Consider, first of all, the similar Old Testament expression 'the blood of grapes'. If the same

rule of interpretation referred to above were to be applied to this expression, it would also mean unfermented red grape juice. However, its use in the Old Testament makes plain that it is a figurative reference to fermented wine.

For example, in Genesis 49:11, the 'blood of grapes' is parallel to wine (yayin) – for yayin, see preceding discussion above on the Old Testament evidence – and, in Deuteronomy 32:14, 'the blood of grapes' is parallel to hamer – that is, fermented wine (see, again, the preceding discussion on the Old Testament evidence). This tells us that the 'blood of the grapes' is *fermented* wine.

Second, there is the use of another similar Old Testament expression, a 'vineyard of red wine' (Isaiah 27:2). Isaiah uses the word 'hamer' here – which means fermented wine (see, again our preceding discussion on the Old Testament evidence). Note, however, that, strictly speaking, a vineyard only contains grape juice – not wine! However, because red wine derives from a vineyard, the expression is legitimate enough. Why, then, should it be held to be unreasonable for Jesus use the expression 'fruit of the vine' when referring to fermented wine? Indeed, the biblical use of both these figurative expressions ('blood of the grape' and 'vineyard of wine') when referring to fermented wine, strongly predispose us to understand the New Testament expression 'the fruit of the vine' in the same way – unless we have good reason not to. To use the example of the butler pressing the grapes into Pharaoh's cup – Genesis 40:9-13 – as an example of 'the fruit of the vine' is not to the point: in the dream, the whole process from gleaning to the presentation of wine in the cup is compressed – after all, does anyone really suppose either that Pharaoh only drank grape juice or, indeed, that the butler squeezed the grapes directly into his cup? The process of fermentation is understood and implied in the dream.

Third, it is significant that this phrase – the 'fruit of the vine' – is used by Christ to denote the element contained in the cup of the Lord's Supper. When instituting the Supper, after the Passover, he used this common Jewish expression when speaking of the Passover wine. While there is no reference to a cup or its contents at the institution of the Passover, it is worth noting that the drink offering poured out before the Lord at the Passover was wine – not grape juice but fermented wine (Numbers 28:24 and Numbers 28:14). There is no reason to think that the Lord used anything other than ordinary fermented wine at the Passover.

Fourth, Christ teaches that the 'fruit of the vine' signifies the 'blood of the new covenant' (Mt. 26:28). There seems to be an implicit connection being made here between the 'blood of the new covenant' and the 'blood of grapes' – which clearly refers to wine (yayin) in Genesis 49:11 and wine (hamer) in Deuteronomy 32:14.

Fifth, and crucially, it is plain that fermented wine was being used at the Lord's Supper in Corinth. The fact that the Corinthians were combining their love feast too closely with the observance of the Lord's Supper, and that they were feasting in factions and in spiritual carelessness, meant that some were coming to the Lord's Supper in a drunken state (1 Cor. 11:21). The word used for 'drunk' is 'metheuo' which always means intoxicated. Note that Paul nowhere condemns their use of fermented wine – which he surely ought to have done if it was against God's law and his regulations for the proper observance of the Supper. In fact, his failure to rebuke it is simply inexplicable as its abuse would have been a major contributory factor to the disorder at the Supper.

Sixth, it is also often overlooked, but well worth noting nonetheless, that the blessings of the gospel under the new covenant are compared, in the Old Testament, with 'a feast of fat things and of wines on the lees...wines on the lees well refined' (Isaiah 25:6). Here, then, the life that Christ brings is compared with meat and with fermented wine. How fitting, then, that Christ's first miracle should involve the production of the fermented wine and that the covenant memorial meal should involve the same? The image is entirely destroyed by the use of grape juice. The symbol has to do with life, power and invigoration and, while these things are demonstrably present in fermented wine, they are not so in grape juice.

Sikera (strong drink): This was an alcoholic beverage which John the Baptist – a life-long Nazirite – was prohibited from drinking (Lk. 1:15).

Gleukos (new wine): This new wine was certainly capable of intoxication. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples are accused of being filled with gleukos (Acts 2:13). Peter, however, attributes their behaviour not to drunkenness (metheuo), but to the Spirit of God (Acts 2:15).

As was the case with the Hebrew language, the Greek of the New Testament also had a word for pure grape juice – the word 'trux'. *However, significantly, this word does not even appear once in the New Testament.* There is therefore no reference in the New Testament to unfermented grape juice.

Conclusion from the New Testament Evidence

It is plain from the preceding evidence that the scriptures of the New Testament do not prohibit the use of fermented wine. We would expect that to be the case as it is considered a blessing from God in the Old Testament. It is also plain that God commands its use in both social and worship contexts – always with the understanding that its lawful use is to be regulated by God alone.

For this reason, it is *unlawful for a Christian to prohibit anyone from its proper use*.

For example, in Colossians 2:20-23, Paul tells us not to subject ourselves to (merely human) regulations – such as ‘do not touch, do not taste, do not handle’ – in order to prevent the indulgence of the flesh. In the spiritual conflict, in which all Christians are engaged, such regulations Paul describes as being ‘of no value’.

Again, Paul tells Timothy not to give attention to ‘doctrines of demons’ – which teach that it is unlawful to marry or to eat certain foods. Rather, he is to teach that everything God has created is good and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Please note that it is not possible to argue that wine is ‘man-made’ rather than ‘God-made’ since the Bible states that wine ‘which makes the heart of man glad’ has been given by God to man (Ps. 104:14-15).

Therefore, to teach that it is unlawful for a Christian to drink alcoholic drinks in moderation is a false teaching.

While studies of this kind may be technical in nature, they are nonetheless necessary: unfermented grape juice simply cannot be equated with the wine ‘which makes the heart of man glad’ any more than any other juice can. It is the lively and invigorating power of the wine which symbolises the life that is in the blood of Christ – shed for our sins. To be continued...

Rev. Kenneth Stewart

An Observation

Last year I helped my grandfather plant some daffodils at the front edge of a highly-prized flower bed in his garden. As winter drew to a close we were regularly checking the spot — eagerly anticipating what would become of the little bulbs. Alas, even the most optimistic of horticulturalists would struggle to find a positive from what has resulted. As spring has sprung our daffodils have fallen far short of their promise — few have appeared



and those that have are pale, limp and weak. This has been a great cause for disappointment, yet it has brought to mind a far greater cause for thankfulness. Thankfulness for what? For the fact that what can be said for our daffodils cannot be said for the promises of God's Word.

Some of our anticipated flowers did not come to fruition but each of God's promises, as recorded in Scripture, surely will. In Joshua 21:45 we are told that 'not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass'. So too His promises yet to be fulfilled will come to pass — not a word will fail. The world may promise us many things but like the daffodils they will leave us disappointed when they fail to substantiate. On the other hand, not a drop of disappointment will be in the portion of those who place their hope and confidence in the sure promises of God.

The problem with the daffodils was not just that some didn't appear, even those that did failed to live up to our expectations. Similarly, we may receive something of what this world promises — wealth, popularity, success — but it will never satisfy. Our sinful hearts may be drawn to these things and drive us in pursuit of them yet like the daffodils they will not live up to our expectations: they will be pale, limp and weak. In sharp contrast, the promises of God — they will satisfy, abundantly so. Our Lord's promises set out in His Word will not only come to pass, but will be more wonderful, more precious, more joyous than we can even imagine. Why? Because they are the promises of the One 'who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think' (Ephesians 3:20).

Our daffodils were a disappointment this year, yet thankfully we have the opportunity to try again for next year. But for those who turn their backs to God, and live their entire lives looking to the promises of this world rather than the promises of God, there will be no such opportunity to try again. Come, take hold of the 'exceedingly great and precious promises' of God (2 Peter 1:4), think on them, meditate upon them, give thanks for them — they will never disappoint.

What Should We Do if God is Hiding His Face?

Here Reformation Scotland apply the solemn thoughts of James Renwick in the 17th Century to our own day in the 21st Century...

(source: www.reformationscotland.org/blog/2018/04/12/what-should-we-do-if-god-is-hiding-his-face/)

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves searching questions. Is the spirit of prayer evident to the extent it ought to be? Is the work of the Holy Spirit restrained in relation to the ordinances of God's worship? Why does the Word not have the powerful effect it ought to have? No doubt there are exceptions but when we take a general view of the professing Church these signs are evident. It's what Scripture calls God hiding His face (see Isaiah 8:17-18; Job 34:29; Psalm 44:24; Isaiah 64:6). Why would God do this? And if this is the case, is there anything we can do?

James Renwick deals with this sad reality in a sermon on Isaiah 8:17. He knew what it was to face persecution and the painful difficulties of a backsliding generation. The flocks to which Renwick preached were in his own words, "a poor, wasted, wounded, afflicted, bleeding, misrepresented, and reproached remnant and handful of suffering people".

Why Would God Hide His Face?

I confess it is hard to tell all the reasons the Lord may have. But the reasons I shall state why the Lord hides His face are:

1. Sin

Sin separates between God and us. Many gross and grievous transgressions have filled this land and defiled it, so that the Lord has no more honour by His people.

2. Hypocrisy

The Lord hides His face in the public ordinances of worship, for the defects of the people in approaching God in them. There is hypocrisy. Few come to hear with a resolution to practice what they hear (Micah 2:7).

3. Need for Prayer

The Lord hides His face, in respect to pouring out the spirit of prayer because He does not have a mind to make haste to deliver the Church (Psalm 10:17). Whenever the Lord has a mind to deliver a people He usually pours out the spirit of prayer.

4. Need for Faith

The Lord hides His face so that He may reduce his people to pure believing or nothing at all.

What Should We Do When God Hides His Face?

1. Search Our Ways and Turn to God

God's people should search and try their ways and turn again to the Lord. This is considered a common truth yet it is a good old truth. Until the land, and especially the godly in it, search and try the evil of their own ways and turn from it, you need never expect peace with God or that He will be at peace with the land again. This was the way that His people took of old (Lamentations 3:40).

2. Justify God

When the Lord hides His face it is the duty of all the godly to justify the Lord in all that He does and to judge yourselves guilty. Many of you are ready to say, the rulers and ministers have the blame of what is in the land but no one says "What have I done?" But until everyone looks to what they themselves have done and justify the Lord in saying that He has done nothing contrary to the covenant (Psalm 89:31-32) you need not expect that your trouble will cease.

3. Strengthen What Remains

When God hides His face it is the duty of His people to strengthen what remains. Is there anything left? I urge you to strengthen it. Go and take words with you and though there be nothing more except words left, make use of these. Speak often one to another. Is prayer left with you? Use it well. Can you pray better with others than alone? Then use it well. Whatever duty you find most freedom in, make it your concern to do it. Whatever remains, strengthen

it. It is the will of the Lord to do so. If you do not, you know what is threatened in Revelation 3:2-3. Strengthen that which remains which is ready to die, for Christ threatens to come upon them as a thief unexpectedly or suddenly.

4. Wait on God

It is the duty of all the Lord's people to wait on Him when He hides His face (Psalm 130:5-7; Psalm 27:14). Wait, I say, on the Lord with courage, reflect on the grounds of hope you had long since and see what grounds you had more than now. Did you the work of God would yet thrive when it was low before? What grounds of hope do you lack now that you had then? Why should you be ashamed to hope in Him now?

- (a) Wait on God because those who do so will never be ashamed.
- (b) Wait on God because this is the most quieting and composing posture in an evil time (Lamentations 3:26)
- (c) Wait on God because this has been the work of the people of God in time past (Psalm 130:6).
- (d) Wait on God because this always has a joyful outcome (Isaiah 25:9).



www.reformationscotland.org

Fundraising Appeal

The Board of Sunrise Christian School has launched a fundraising appeal—‘100k in 100 days’—with a view to purchasing new premises for the school. The Lord has blessed the work of Sunrise thus far, to the point that the school has now outgrown its current premises in Robroyston – hence the need for a new building. Below is an excerpt from the school website (www.sunrisechristianschool.org) with more information on the appeal and how you can contribute if the Lord so leads you...



Following the Board meeting on Monday the 19th of March, we are happy to announce that the Sandyhills Gospel Hall in South Glasgow got unanimous approval as suitable prospective new premises. It has a usable hall and plenty of land for expansion of the school. It will require a new central heating system and other renovations to adjust it for the school use.

We are now launching an urgent appeal for funds. We have to raise £100,000 to acquire this property and complete all the necessary work inside to make it suitable for provision of education. We are appealing to all those who are able to help our school move further forward in this very important step which will enable the provision of Christian education from nursery through to secondary. To learn more about the purpose and vision of our school please see www.sunrisechristianschool.org.uk

If like us you see the need of reformed Christian education in our land, a school that provides Christian education and environment, please donate on BT MyDonate page

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/sunrisechristianschool>

or send a cheque for “Sunrise Christian School” to the school’s current address: 34 Saughs Drive, Glasgow G33 1HG (Robroyston Church of Scotland building).

As you know, we are hoping to pursue our vision and start a nursery/pre-school based on Christian values and a much needed, (and hoped for by pupils and parents), secondary school. This new property and the land are crucial in enabling development of these projects. We believe the Lord will provide as He has always in the past. From the beginning of the school, all achieved so far has been on the back of the Lord hearing our prayers. Please be part of this by praying for the means to purchase this building and land and if you can, please donate today. **We need 100K in 100days!**

Upcoming Conferences



The 29TH SCOTTISH REFORMED CONFERENCE

Proclaiming the Truth Since 1990

Saturday 12th May
Hamilton College, Hamilton, ML3 0AY



Dr Steven J. Lawson
One Passion Ministries



Rev Kenneth Stewart
Glasgow RPCS

You can register online or at the door on the day
(£5 adults, £4 students, free for u17s)

Registration opens 9.15am | Conference 10am-3.30pm
(Lunch will not be provided)

To register, or for more information,
visit www.scottishreformedconference.org

Reformed Conference

For Young Adults

26/27th Oct 2018 | Loch Lomond

Lord willing, on 26/27th October 2018 the Glasgow RP Church will be hosting a reformed youth conference on the banks of Loch Lomond.

The venue for the weekend will be Rowardennan Lodge and Rev. Kenneth Stewart will be the speaker. The conference age-range will be teens to young families.

There will be three addresses, one on the Friday evening and two on the Saturday, followed by a Q&A session with our speaker. There will be periods of free time across the weekend which will provide the opportunity to explore the shoreline and hills in the local area as we enjoy fellowship together.

More information will follow in the coming weeks and months but we hope that, wherever you are in Scotland, you'll save the date and join us in October for what we pray will be an edifying and enjoyable time for us all!

Visit the links below for further information on:



Our church: www.glasgowrpcs.org



The Scottish RP church: www.rpcscotland.org/



The global RP church: www.rpglobalalliance.org/



Other sources used: www.reformationscotland.org
www.sunrisechristianschool.org

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*"Therefore, my beloved brethren,
be steadfast, immovable, always
abounding in the work of the
Lord, knowing that your labour
is not in vain in the Lord"*

1 Corinthians 15:58