

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

The Discerner

A Christian Apologetics & Counter-
Cult Ministry

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The Discerner editorial team is

Steve Lagoon, Steve Devore, and

Doug Steiner

PO Box 206

Chaska, MN 55318

612-331-3342 / 1-800-562-9153

FAX 612-331-3342

info@ras.org <http://www.ras.org>

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Religion Analysis Service

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WITH THIS ISSUE

Dear Reader,

We welcome you to another issue of The Discerner!

Our feature article is by our Canadian friend Bary Gaudrealt. Bary has written another fine article comparing and contrasting the book *Doctrine and Covenants*, which Mormons (or more properly the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) claim is inspired Scripture. Mr. Gaudrealt proves that Mormon claims within Doctrine and Covenants must be rejected, because these teachings are not in agreement with the Bible.

The second article is by our ministry partners Don and Joy Veinot of Midwest Christian Outreach. It is titled *Is Progressive Christianity Christian?* We owe a special debt of thanks to Don and Joy for their excellent work of informing and equipping the Church against so many modern-day heresies.

Our final article addresses the Question and Use of Alcohol for believers. It is the second of two consecutive articles on this subject. (The first article appeared in the previous quarterly issue of The Discerner). These articles represent a biblical examination regarding the topic of alcohol which is sometimes viewed differently among Christians and churches.

As always, check out our Bible Quiz, this time on Bible Hermeneutics (the skills we use to study and interpret the Bible).

We hope you enjoy this issue! Feel free to submit questions and/or topics for future consideration in The Discerner as well. We appreciate your prayers and generous gifts that make this ministry of Biblical Truth truth possible.

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Steve Lagoon

President of Religion Analysis Service

23 REASONS WHY I CANNOT ACCEPT MORMON DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS AS SCRIPTURE

by Bary Gaudrealt

Introduction

Can we, as Bible-Believing Christians, accept the Claims of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) that their book *Doctrine and Covenants* should be regarded as “Scripture”? Does it contradict orthodox Christian doctrine? Does it promote beliefs that are, in fact, demonic in nature? Let us compare the teachings of *Doctrine and Covenants* with the teachings found in the Bible (KJV) and find out the real truth.

With each topic, the Mormon from *Doctrine and Covenants* appears first (A), followed by a biblical response (B).

I. The One True Church, Did it Go Through A State Of Complete Apostasy Shortly After The Apostles Died Or Did It Always Exist?

A. *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:30. The Latter-Day Saints Church is the Only True Church that now exists after having been restored from a global apostasy.

“And also to those whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of the church, and bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.”

B. BIBLE: The Christian Church has never ceased to exist from the time of christ to the present day:

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me unto write to you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

II. Should We Receive, The Present Latter-Day Saint Prophets Words As Though They Are inspired of God?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5:

There is more scripture that comes from the mouth of the present day prophet besides the Bible. “For his word ye shall receive, as if from my own mouth, in all patience and faith.”

B. BIBLE: God’s Word (Being the Bible, composed of 66 books) is Complete.

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).

III. Do Those Who Accept The Book Of Mormon Receive The Crown Of Life?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 20:14:

Those who hold to the Book of Mormon receive the crown of life. “And those who receive it [Book of Mormon] in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life.”

B. BIBLE: The Biblical gospel is the only means by which one can receive eternal life, not the false gospel of Mormonism.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might bear well with him” (2 Corinthians 11:4).

IV. Was There A Council Gods On Heaven Before The Creation Of The World?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 121:32: There was a council of gods in heaven before the world existed.

“According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before the world

was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter eternal presence and into his immortal rest.”

B. BIBLE: A claimed “Council of gods in Heaven” (which is not found in the Bible) would be in accord with Polytheism. But the Bible teaches that there is one God only (Monotheism). Within the nature of the one God, there are three persons co-eternally existing—not a council of gods.

1. The Father eternally existed: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever hast thou formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2).

2. The Son eternally existed: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6–7).

3. The Holy Spirit eternally existed: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

V. Did The Lord Create All Things Spiritual First Then Physically Second?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 29:31–32: God created the spiritual first.

“For the power of my Spirit created I them; yea, all things both spiritual and temporal—First spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual, which is the last of my work.”

B. BIBLE: God created the physical first: “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:46). “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

VI. Were Joseph Smith And Oliver Cowdery Ordained In An Aaronic Priesthood?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 27:8: Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained into the Aaronic priesthood.

“Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron.”

B. BIBLE: The Aaronic priesthood does not exist in regards to the New Testament Church Age. Christ (who holds the unchanging, eternal priesthood of Melchizedek) is now the final and last great high priest.

“And they truly were many [Aaronic] priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” (Hebrews 7: 23–24).

“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4).

VII. Was Joseph Smith Ordained To Be An Apostle By Peter James And John Or Is This Merely “Doctrines And Commandments Of Men” (compare with Matthew 15:9)?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 27:12: Joseph Smith was ordained by Peter, James and John to be apostles.

“And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them.”

B. BIBLE: The teaching that Joseph Smith was ordained as an Apostle is a false doctrine. Like in the days of the Apostle Paul, there are those in this present day and age who claim to be “Apostles of Christ” who but are not. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13).

VIII. Does God The Father Have A Body Of Flesh And Bones, Or Is He An Omnipresent Spirit Being?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22. God the Father is an exalted man having a body of flesh and bones.

“The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and

bones, but is as personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”

B. BIBLE: The Father is an omnipresent spiritual Being.

“Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:23–24).

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

IX. Polygamy

A. Polygamy per Doctrine and Covenants 132:38:

“David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many other of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and nothing did they sin save in those things which received not of me.”

B. BIBLE: Man is to be married to one wife only as God ordained at the creation of mankind.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife [not wives]: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

X. Did Man Exist Before His Earth Life?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29: Man lived in eternity past. “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.”

B. BIBLE: Man came into existence at the time of the physical creation.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

“And the LORD God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

XI. After Man Was Redeemed From The Fall, Did He Become As Innocent As He Was Before The Fall?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 93:38: Man is presently in a state of innocence before God.

“Every spirit of man was innocent from the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.”

B. BIBLE: Man will have a sinful nature until the physical body dies.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:10–12).

“Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42–44).

XII. Is Baptism For The Dead Biblical?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18: Is baptism for the dead biblical?

“It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel.”

B. BIBLE: Paul excludes himself and the church in the below passage by saying “what will they do” who are baptized for the dead. “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead not rise at all?” (1 Corinthians 15:29a).

XIII. Did Jesus Say That The Apostle John Would Not Die?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 7:1–3: John did not die:

“And the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you should ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you. And he said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry till I come in my glory, and shalt prophecy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.”

B. Bible: Jesus never said that John would not die.

“Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (John 21:21–23).

XIV. Are Angels Resurrected Personages Who Have Flesh And Bones Or Are They Spirit Beings?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 129:1. Angels are physical beings. “Angels, who are resurrected personages, having bodies of flesh and bones.”

B. BIBLE: Angels are spiritual beings.

“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. ... Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:7, 14).

XV. Is Baptism Necessary To Wash Away Sin?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 39:10. Baptism is necessary to wash away sins: “But, behold, the days of thy deliverance are come, if thou will hearken to my voice, which saith unto thee: ‘Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling my name, and you shall receive by Spirit, and a blessing so great as have never known.’”

B. BIBLE: The Gospel of Grace (salvation by grace) washes away sin:

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

XVI. Do The Dead Get A Second Chance To Be Saved?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 138:30. The dead get a second chance after death to be saved:

“But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that are in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.”

B. BIBLE: Only in this life-time can one turn to Christ and be saved:

“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

XVII. Is Salvation By One's Own Righteous Works?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23: One's own righteous works saves their soul: “But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”

B. BIBLE: One is saved by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

XVIII. Will There Be Marriage And Procreation In Heaven?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19: Marriage and procreation continue in heaven. “And they shall pass by the angels, and the gods which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as has

been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and continuation of the seeds forever and ever.”

B. BIBLE: Marriage and procreation in heaven are not taught in the Bible: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30).

XIX. Are There Three Heavenly Degrees Of Glory?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 88:29–31. There are three heavenly spheres, which are three degrees of heavenly glory.

“Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even fullness. And those who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even fullness. And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall receive the same, even fullness.”

B. BIBLE: There are three Bible heavens: the very abode of God, the universe, and the atmosphere around the Earth.

1. The abode of God is called heaven: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9b).

2. The universe is called heaven:

“And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament to give light upon the earth” (Genesis 1:15–17).

3. The atmosphere around the earth is called heaven: “Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens” (Psalm 148:4).

XX. Does God The Father And Jesus Christ Indwell The Believers Heart?

A. Doctrine and Covenants Section 130:3. The Father and Son do not indwell in the believer’s heart: “The appearing of the Father, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea of the Father and the Son [to] dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false.”

B. BIBLE: The Father And The Son and The Holy Spirit Indwell The Believer.

1. The Father indwells the believer: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

2. The Son indwells the believer: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

3. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

XXI. Is Necromancy¹ acceptable?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 129:1–9: Necromancy is promoted:

“There are two kinds of beings in heaven, namely: Angels, who are resurrected personages, having bodies of flesh and bones—For instance, Jesus said: Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Secondly: the spirit of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected, but inherit the same glory. When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you. If it be an angel he will do so, and you will not feel his hand. If he be a spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear—Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will deliver his message. If it be the devil; as an angel of light, when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand, but you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him. These are the three grand keys whereby you may know whether any administration is from God.”

B. BIBLE: Necromancy is condemned.

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer” (Deuteronomy 18:11).

¹ RAS Note: Necromancy is the practice of communicating with the dead, often with the goal of finding out a future event(s).

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1).

XXII. Did Michael The Archangel (As A Spirit) Become The Man, Adam?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 27:11. Michael the Archangel became Adam. “And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.”

B. Bible: There is no Biblical support for the claim that Michael the Archangel became Adam.

1. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God (angels are not).

“And God said, Let Us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

2. Adam was physically made from dust. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground. (Genesis 2:7a)

3. Adam came into existence when God blew life into his body . . . and [God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7b)

XXIII. Are Spirit And Matter The Same Thing Or Is This Just A Strange Doctrine?

A. Doctrine and Covenants 131:7. All spirit is pure matter. “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes.”

B. Bible: Spirit and matter are two distinct things; therefore this is a strange doctrine. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Hebrews 13:9).

Conclusion

After comparing the teachings of the Latter-Day Saints in their supposed book of scripture called Doctrine and Covenants, with the holy, pure, and complete Word of Truth (the Bible), it clear that Doctrine and Covenants greatly differs from our inspired Bible. Therefore it must be rejected as a work of false teaching.

IS PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY CHRISTIAN?

By Don and Joy Veinot

As human beings, we cannot know the heart of another. We certainly do not know someone's spiritual condition as it relates to the Lord. However, determining whether individual Progressives are Christian is a completely different question than determining if Progressive Christianity is Christian. This is hardly a new issue.

Machen on Liberalism

In his excellent 1923 book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, J. Gresham Machen compared and contrasted historic Christian teachings with those of theological liberals. At times he would say liberals are religious but not Christian. Machen wasn't speaking about a liberal's individual salvation but rather their overall doctrines in essential areas. In his Introduction, Machen commented on why these sorts of questions are important:

In the sphere of religion, in particular, the present time is a time of conflict; the great redemptive religion which has always been known as Christianity is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology.¹

The Dictionary Problem

Machen's book was very important because of a "dictionary problem." Like today, the liberals of his time were using the same vocabulary as traditional Christianity but providing different definitions to biblical terms, thus deceiving others. Liberals in Machen's day were focused on social issues, not eternal redemption. Machen commented:

Paul was not interested merely in the ethical principles of Jesus; he was not interested merely in general principles of religion or of ethics. On the contrary, he was interested in the redeeming work of Christ and its effect upon us. His primary interest was in Christian doctrine, and Christian doctrine not merely in its presuppositions but at its center. If Christianity is to be made

¹ Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism* (p. 6). E4 Group. Kindle Edition

independent of doctrine, then Paulinism must be removed from Christianity root and branch.²

Progressivism's Embrace of Worldly Morality

Progressivism is an updated version of the liberalism Machen addressed—but goes a good deal further. In the new progressive version, sin is not merely excused because of “poverty and neglect” or some such justification, but actually embraced and celebrated.

Christians cannot give hearty approval to unrighteous acts. In Romans 1:26–31, Paul recites a long list of deadly sins, and then states in Romans 1:32 that:

“Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.”

The Emerging/Emergent church and the Red-letter movement

The new and improved version of the Old Liberalism was greatly advanced by the emerging/emergent church movement of the 1990’s and early 2000’s³. In 2007 Tony Campolo and Jim Wallace launched the Red-Letter Christian movement. Their focus was on the red lettered passages in the gospels—the words of Jesus. Their emphasis was on what they termed “social justice”—elimination of poverty, pro-choice, normalizing homosexuality and other liberal causes, both old and new. It was and is a very man-centered, creation-centered religion which has an extremely high view of man and a very low view of God and His Holiness. They cherry-pick the Scriptures, and erase (in their minds) whatever of God’s words they do not like.

The Progressive Embrace of ungodly sexual mores

As with all who want to reimagine God and change Christianity to fit a man-centered theology, they usually begin with something which is true and proceed to redefine it to something which categorically rejects Biblical teaching. For example, God created us as sexual beings. It is a gift to be enjoyed when used properly within a particular relationship, a husband and wife. God created them for one another and with that accomplished we read,

“Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the

2 Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism* (p. 40). E4 Group. Kindle Edition

3 See <https://www.gotquestions.org/emerging-church-emergent.html>

man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:24–25).

Jesus reaffirmed this truth in Matthew 19:4–5, Mark 10:7 (both in Red Letters!) and Paul reiterates it in Ephesians 5:31 at the end of his comments on marriage. All sexual relationships apart from the one male and one female matrimonial union is sin, according to God. Some have pointed to the woman caught in adultery in John 8, when Jesus told her He did not condemn her. What they seem to overlook—besides the overall context of what was going on—are the five very important words He finished with, “go and sin no more.” Adultery is sin and she was told to stop sinning in this way.

The Sovereign Judge of all the Earth

Jesus also made clear that He had not come to earth at that time to judge, but to (Mark 10:45) “give His life as a ransom for many.” He came to die, so we could gain forgiveness through His blood. But Jesus also made clear that He would return *to* judge those who refused to acknowledge their sin, their need for Him and His forgiveness,

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with Him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31–32 ESV).

Jesus will also judge believers—for rewards or loss of rewards—at the Bema Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:10). And He will judge non-believers at the Great White Throne judgment. (Revelation 20:11–15) People ignore these judgments at their peril—for God’s Word will be fulfilled. God is not just an indulgent grandpa giving out candy, as so many people seem to believe. God is a loving God, but He is also just—we have been clearly told that He will hold us accountable for our behavior.

Progressive Christianity has come a long way since the initial Red Letter Christian days. Tony Campolo, Brian McLaren, Jim Wallis, and others are now defenders of the LGBTQ+ behaviors. Can plural marriage or pedophilia be far behind? Popular Progressive Christian Jennifer Hatmaker calls for “Openness and Affirmation” of LGBTQ+ and inclusion in churches with no suggestion of the need to “go and sin no more.”

Amy Grant's embrace of the LGBTQ+ movement

A few days ago, the LGBTQ+ publication, PrideSource, carried the story, “‘Gay. Straight. It Does Not Matter’: Amy Grant Takes Her LGBTQ+ Support One Step Further In New Interview.” PrideSource was positively thrilled at what appears to be Amy Grant's affirmation of their sexual practices:

“It doesn't matter how we behave,” Grant continued. “It doesn't matter how we're wired. We're all our best selves when we believe to our core, ‘I'm loved.’ And then our creativity flourishes. We're like, ‘I'm gonna arrange flowers on your table and my table.’ When we're loved, we're brave enough to say yes to every good impulse that comes to us.”

If the Progressives were simply saying that God invites all to come to Him as we are for salvation, we would agree. Jesus died for sinners. That is biblical, and great news, since we can in no way “clean ourselves up.” But God does not leave us there. We are to be holy as He is holy. We are to run from sexual and other sin.

A god who is not holy and supports normalizing and celebrating sinful practices is a god of our own imagination, created in our image and likeness. This is decidedly not the biblical view of God.

The Biblical call to holiness

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:13–16).

The urgent need for discernment today

Christians very much need discernment, since just about all “Christian-based” cults, such as Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, use Christian terminology but completely twist its meaning. Progressive Christianity is no different in that respect. The name is also deceptive, since their thinking is not progressive, but rather completely regressive, back to the paganism of ancient Greece and Rome. To borrow from Machen, Progressive Christianity may be religious, but it is decidedly not Christianity.

To paraphrase 1 John 2:19:

They progressed from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they progressed out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Though we may be called “haters,” we say none of this out of hate for anyone. The cry of our hearts is that everyone will take advantage of God’s indescribable grace, turn to the Lord, and be saved.

Don and Joy Veinot

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THE BIBLE AND THE QUESTION OF ALCOHOL (PART 2)

By Steve Lagoon

Sorting Out Just What Wine Was In Biblical Times

Bible scholars disagree as to the actual alcoholic content of wine referred to in the Bible. Some argue that wine was always fermented, others arguing that the context must determine whether it was fermented wine or unfermented grape juice.

Surprisingly, the above debate represents the heart of the controversy over whether Christians should drink alcohol.

One-wine Theorists

For instance, *The NIV Archaeological Study Bible* plainly asserts:

There is no basis for suggesting that either the Greek or the Hebrews terms for wine refer to unfermented grape juice.¹

On the other hand Reynolds states:

{The Hebrew Word} *Yayin* is assumed by many people to be always an alcoholic drink. This is a mistake which has led to much confusion and to much intoxication, which might easily have been avoided.²

Two-wine Theorists

With reference to two-wine theorists, the question naturally arises as to how you can know which kind of wine is being referred to in a particular Bible passage. As with any word that has more than one meaning, the context *must* determine its meaning.

For at least some prohibitionist advocates, it is easy to determine which meaning is correct; any time a biblical passage is critical of the use of wine, then fermented/alcoholic wine is in view. Conversely, any time that wine is positively portrayed in the Bible, it is referring to unfermented grape juice.

Now this is a nice and tidy hermeneutical guide. But is it correct? Well, I would argue that it is impossible to completely refute or prove.

1 *NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture*, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan, 2005), 2015.

2 Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol* (L. Reynolds Foundation, Not Dated), 26.

Complicating matters, it is also impossible to refute or prove that wine always means fermented intoxicating wine.

I agree with the two-wine theorists that wine usually refers to fermented intoxicating wine, but it can also refer to *must* (grape juice just processed from the vine) which has little or no alcoholic content.

Nevertheless, the argument that ‘whenever wine use is portrayed positively unfermented grape juice is in view’ is unconvincing—in my opinion, simply too clever by half.

Watered-Down Wine

Some prohibitionists argue that although wine in biblical times was technically fermented alcohol, nevertheless it was so-watered down (two or three parts water to the wine) that its intoxicating effects were practically negligible.

Strength Of Wine In Biblical Times

Bustanoby explained:

Only the best wine was fully aged and high in alcohol content. The poor, who were in the majority, had to settle for a cheap, low-alcohol beverage. And there is evidence that the diluting of wine was common not only to the Greco-Roman world of the first century, but also among the Jews centuries before.³

Bustanoby adds:

Alcohol abuse among the Jews was probably not a large problem because they drank wine mixed with water—three parts water to one part wine. This was called mazug.⁴

Pastor Jim Delany further explained how wine was prepared during biblical times:

In Jewish society wine was also mixed with water, and unmixed wine was considered a strong drink. Several Old Testament passages spoke of the difference between wine and strong drink (Deuteronomy 14:26; 29:6).⁵

3 Andre S. Bustanoby, *The Wrath of Grapes: Drinking and the Church Divided*, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Book House, 1987), 22.

4 Andre S. Bustanoby, *The Wrath of Grape*, 43.

5 Pastor Jim Delany, *Wine and Strong Drink in the Bible: How Wine Was Drunk in Ancient Times*, Salem NH (Salem Bible Church, not dated) at website <https://www.salembible.org/wine-strong-drink-in-the-bible-part-3> retrieved February 10, 2021.

Responding to the argument that the wine drunk by Jews and Christians in the first century was ‘so watered down as to be practically non-alcoholic’ inspired this exclamation from McClintock and Strong:

If wine were not intoxicating, the apostle might as well have exhorted them against drinking too much milk or too much water.⁶

Indeed, common sense tells us that if wine were really so watered-down, all the warnings against its abuse would not have been necessary.

Could The Ancients Preserve Unfermented Grape Juice?

Related to the meaning of wine in the Bible is also the question of whether the ancients had the ability to preserve grape juice in an unfermented form. Surprisingly, some sources affirm this ability while others deny it.

On the one hand, Arnold Schultz is representative of those who deny the ancients were able to preserve unfermented grape juice:

There apparently were no attempts made to preserve wine in an unfermented state ... Some scholars are of the opinion that unfermented wine was impossible in ancient times in [Palestine].⁷

On the other hand, Andreas Köstenberger is just as confident that unfermented grape juice was among the drinks of the vine consumed in Israel:

In the Greco-Roman world, and presumably in the Palestine of Jesus’ day, three kinds of wine were in use: fermented wines, which were usually mixed in the proportion of two or three parts of water to one of wine; new wine, made of grape juice (similar to cider, not fermented); and wines in which, by boiling the unfermented grape juice, the process of fermentation had been stopped and the formation of alcohol prevented.⁸

Bustanoby argued that those who think ‘unfermented grape juice’ was practiced in biblical times:

6 John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 1016.

7 Arnold C. Schultz, *Wine and Strong Drink*, article in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Merrill C. Tenney, Editor, Volume 5, Grand Rapids MI (Regency Reference Library/Zondervan, 1976), 938.

8 John, Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan, 2002), 26.

...completely misunderstand what ancient historians have to say about winemaking because they themselves do not understand the chemistry of wine. The recipes that come down from ancient historians do not tell us how to preserve grape juice. Rather, they tell us how to make wine and keep it from turning into vinegar.⁹

Whether preserved grape juice was known to ancient Israel is a question that will perhaps be settled by further historical research. This unknown suggests caution in the debate over the nature of wine in the Bible.

Hard Liquor

In discussions about the biblical view of alcohol, it should be kept in mind that most sources deny that hard or distilled liquor was available in biblical times—that did not begin to be produced until the late Middle Ages.

In biblical times, the difference between wine or strong drink had more to do with how the wine was mixed and the ratio between the wine and water. The hard liquors of modern times were simply unknown in biblical times:

Now this rendering of *shekar* is better than that of the King James Version (KJV) which is *strong drink*. The scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Luther included), were evidently unaware that distilled beverages ('strong drink') were introduced in the twelfth century, and so, in suggesting that God permitted the purchase and drinking of distilled liquors in the days of Moses, they committed an anachronism.¹⁰

Prohibitionist's Arguments In Favor Of Total Alcohol Abstinence

Let us consider some of the arguments advanced by opponents of alcohol consumption. To begin with, Teetotalers understandably point to all of the biblical warnings against drunkenness in the Bible, and argue that the safest course is total abstinence concerning alcohol.

Slippery-Slope Arguments

Teetotalers advance several types of slippery-slope arguments in support of their stance against the use of alcohol.

9 Andre S. Bustanoby, *The Wrath of Grapes*, 22.

10 Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol*, 19.

For instance, they argue that one cannot get drunk if they don't begin to drink. Likewise, they warn that the use of alcohol can lead to the use, and abuse, of harder forms of alcohol, and even become a gateway to illicit drug use. These arguments are certainly true, and reasonably support a personal decision of abstinence, and at the very least serve as a warning against the abuse of alcohol.

Health Issues Caused By Alcohol

Many Teetotalers note the destructive health consequences of alcohol. For instance, Stephen Reynolds stated:

Numerous medical reports published in journals in different countries [are] showing that even moderate drinking of alcohol actually destroys brain cells which are never replaced. It is hard to see how anyone can contemplate the destruction of a part of his body with equanimity. When the part of the body first to be destroyed are cells in the brain controlling moral discernment, the complacency of mankind about this wholesale destruction of human capacity is astounding.¹¹

There is a long-running debate among medical and scientific researchers concerning the deleterious health consequences of alcohol consumption. Many studies have actually shown that moderate use of alcohol, say one glass of wine a day, is actually good for the heart. But this continues to be debated. Common sense suggests that most of the negative health consequences from alcohol are concerning those who abuse alcohol, and are not for those who drink in moderation.

Alcohol And Poverty

Again, common sense suggests that poverty can certainly be a consequence of alcohol abuse rather than alcohol consumed in moderation.

Alcohol And Abusive Behavior

There can be no denying the destructive effects alcohol abuse has on the individual and those around him to include society at large. It is quite understandable some choose to have no acquaintance with or desire for a substance that has the potential to cause so much harm when abused.

11 Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol*, 203.

At the same time, the freedom to drink alcohol responsibly, and in moderation, should not be taken away because others have abused their privilege.

The False Equivalence Of Moderation

Stephen Reynolds is representative of Teetotalers who make a false equivalence between alcohol and other immoralities:

If we are told, ‘do not even look at obscene shows’ (e.g. X-rated movies), would we be doing right in saying that the command means to be moderate in our attendance at such performances? Of course not.¹²

I am sorry, but it is just not a fair comparison (it’s apples and oranges), because such X-rated movies are intrinsically immoral, while there is a separate category of things that are not immoral per se, but only become so in excess.

For instance, things like lying, stealing, raping, and adultery are immoral in themselves, regardless of how little or much they are done.

But other things only become immoral when they are out of order or in excess such as gluttony (overeating), greed (the love of money being the root of all kinds of evil), drug abuse (for non-medicinal purposes)., etc. Certainly, *this is true of alcohol which is fine in moderation but becomes sin in excess.*

How Can We Know When We Cross The Line And Drink Too Much?

Reynolds asks: “How can we be sure when the amount of any toxic substance we may take into our bodies may become sinful in his holy eyes?”¹³

It’s a fair question. I suggest that those who drink know their limits, and know if and when they need to stop to avoid intoxication and thus sin. After all, it is a moral choice to drink in excess.

It is similar to the sin of gluttony. While the line between healthy eating and overeating (gluttony) may not be easy to explain, most people instinctively know the difference. Surely, God’s gifts of reason

¹² Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol*, 4.

¹³ Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol*, 119.

and conscience are helpful guides in healthy living in regard to food and drink!

The Relationship Between Drinking And Immoral Behavior

There can be no doubt that drinking alcohol can impair our discernment and the process of making moral judgments. Stephen Reynolds stated:

Research has also found an impairment of moral discernment with an intake of only one or two ounces of alcohol.¹⁴

Perhaps drinking a few ounces of straight hard liquor will cause one to become slightly intoxicated (depending on variables such as the kind of liquor, how fast it was drank, the person's body weight and tolerance for alcohol, etc.). But common sense suggests that most people do not become intoxicated, or act out immorally, after one or two ounces of alcohol.

So, while Reynold's warnings concerning the intoxicating effects of alcohol, even at smaller amounts than might be expected, are well taken, nevertheless, moderationists advocate responsible drinking, always avoiding intoxication.

Sandison gave this impassioned warning against the use of alcohol:

There is no excuse for the indulgence of a habit which, even in its most temperate aspect, is pernicious, morally and physically, like all other sinful indulgences. The Bible admonishes us to avoid all such practices, and especially to avoid drink. The 'temperate drinker,' who believes he is doing no wrong in tampering lightly with this great evil, should remember that he is incurring a double responsibility—risking the wreck of his own soul and body, and also leading others by his bad example to a like fate.¹⁵

It is certainly true that excessive consumption of alcohol will affect our moral judgments and lower our normal inhibitions. Under the influence of alcohol, people will do what they otherwise would not do. Indeed, that is often just the reason some choose to drink. Afterwards, they can simply blame their behavior on the alcohol, as if they themselves were simply victims and not responsible for their own immoral behavior.

14 Stephen M. Reynolds, *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol*, 204.

15 George Sandison & Staff, *Bible Answers for 1000 Difficult Questions*, Iowa Falls IA (World Bible Publishers, no date), 761.

But again, we must insist upon personal responsibility for our behavior, and that includes the decision to become inebriated. For when we do, we are responsible for anything and everything we do under the influence.

The fact is that millions of people throughout the world—and throughout history—have responsibly and moderately consumed alcohol, so that choice and/or privilege should not be curtailed by the irresponsibility of others.

Moderationist's Arguments For The Moderate Use Of Alcohol.

Let us consider some of the reasoning behind the moderationists' position. Thomas Wegner Jr. sums it up well:

It is crucial to recall what we've already seen above: 1). that an abundance of wine is a sign of God's blessing; 2). that removal of wine was a sign of His cursing; and 3). that the coming of the Messianic Age was prophesied as a time when choice wine would flow in abundance.¹⁶

Teetotalers appeal to all the warnings about alcohol in the Bible, and wonder why anyone would even think of drinking alcohol. But the fact that God warns against the abuse of alcohol does not preclude the responsible use of alcohol any more than the warnings against greed require total abstinence from the use of money, or that warnings against gluttony require total abstinence from food (if that were possible).

Conclusion

It should be noted that while there are many warnings against the abuse of alcohol in the Bible, nowhere is there any prohibition or law against the drinking of alcohol per se.

The Bible throughout leaves the choice to drink alcohol—or not to drink alcohol—a matter of personal conscience and choice. I suggest that to prohibit to Christians what God does not prohibit is an expression of legalism.

Summary

What I am arguing is that it is acceptable to have a personal conviction against drinking alcohol. It is even fine to advocate for 'the

16 Thomas Wegner Jr., *Understanding the Use of Wine in the Lord's Supper*, page 6. at web address: http://trinitypres.us/downloads/position_papers/pdf/Understanding%20the%20Use%20of%20Wine%20in%20the%20Lord's%20Supper.pdf, page 6, retrieved February 12, 2021.

abstinence position. But what crosses the line to become legalism is when supporters of alcohol abstinence condemn others who choose to drink alcohol and call a sin what God does not. We do well to quote and follow the inspired words of the Apostle Paul (NIV):

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.” (Colossians 2:16)

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

BIBLE QUIZ: BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

1. When a speaker uses obvious exaggeration to make a point, it is called?
 - a. Amphictony
 - b. Distich
 - c. Hyperbole
 - d. Harvathian point
2. When interpreting a biblical passage, it is important to identify the genre. Which one is not an example of a biblical genre?
 - a. Jamnia
 - b. Wisdom
 - c. Poetry
 - d. Narrative
3. Which book is not an example of biblical wisdom writing?
 - a. Proverbs
 - b. Ecclesiastes
 - c. Isaiah
 - d. Song of Songs
4. Which biblical book does not include the apocalyptic genre?
 - a. Genesis
 - b. Daniel
 - c. Matthew (the Olivet Discourse in Chapter 24)
 - d. Revelation
5. Which is not a biblical covenant?
 - a. Abrahamic Covenant
 - b. Rainbow Covenant
 - c. The Melchisedek Covenant
 - d. The Davidic Covenant

6. Which is not a good principle for interpreting biblical parables?
- a. There is one primary point to the parable.
 - b. The context often offers clues to its meaning
 - c. Most parables have a secret meaning that only pastors and theologians know.
 - d. We should not attempt to make a parable “walk on all fours” by assigning a meaning to every part.
7. What is not a major school in the history of interpreting the Bible?
- a. Bullingerism
 - b. Allegorical
 - c. Grammatical-Historical-Literal
 - d. Midrash
8. Which is not a school of interpreting New Testament prophetic material?
- a. Pre-millennialism
 - b. Post-millennialism
 - c. A-millennialism
 - d. Hyper-millennialism
9. Which is not a good biblical hermeneutical principle?
- a. A text, out of context, is a pretext.
 - b. Jesus Christ (Christocentrism) is the central unifying idea of the Bible.
 - c. If the plain sense, makes sense, don't look for any other sense.
 - d. Each person should have their own meaning of a biblical text.
10. Which is not a good hermeneutical principle?
- a. The interpretation must agree with the holy books of other major world religions.
 - b. We should avoid “wooden literal” interpretations that do not recognize the use of figures of speech.
 - c. We should seek to understand what the author meant when he wrote the passage.
 - d. We can be aided by checking what the same author wrote in other biblical passages.

Answers:

1 c; 2 a; 3 c; 4 a; 5 c; 6 c; 7 a; 8 d; 9 d; 10 a.

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