

Wine in the Lord's Supper

A Position Paper

Submitted to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

in which it is proven from the Holy Scriptures and plain reason that true wine, the fermented juice of grapes, should be used in the sacrament¹

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¹ This paper is a revised and improved version of a paper that was presented to the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in 2019. The previous paper was not studied or considered; instead, it was returned to the Midwest Presbytery without comment on June 11, 2019.

SUMMARY

This paper argues that wine, the fermented juice of grapes, must be used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Unfermented grape juice should not be used.

The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. Therefore, the Bible must regulate our worship. The regulative principle—not the traditions of men—must determine the content of the cup.

The five biblical passages that refer to the content of the cup call the content of the cup “this fruit of the vine,” “the fruit of the vine” (two times), “the cup of blessing which we bless,” and “the cup of the Lord.” Sound principles of interpretation, including a careful consideration of the original contexts, must be used to determine the meanings of these terms, and the temptation to import modern prejudices into these texts must be resisted.

The three biblical passages in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 teach that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover, and after the disciples prepared the Passover meal, as Jesus had commanded them to do. At that time, the Jews used wine in the Passover meal (Jubilees 49), and used the term “the fruit of the vine” to denote wine in their prayer of blessing over wine (Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1). Therefore, “the fruit of the vine” is a liturgical and technical term that denotes wine, the fermented juice of grapes. “The fruit of the vine” is not a generic term, and does not include either solid grapes or unfermented grape juice. Moreover, the Passover, and the institution of the Lord's Supper, took place about six months after the grape harvest, at a time when unfermented grape juice was not available.

The fourth passage (I Corinthians 10:16) uses the phrase “the cup of blessing.” This also is a Jewish liturgical term. It denotes wine, the fermented juice of grapes.

The fifth passage (I Corinthians 11:17-34) teaches us that some members of the church of Corinth became drunk, which proves that they used an intoxicating wine. Thus, we must conclude that the apostolic church used wine, the fermented juice of grapes.

The subordinate standards of the RPCNA, especially the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, describe the content of the cup as “wine” about a dozen times, but never mention grape juice. Therefore, the use of unfermented grape juice is not authorized.

Many evangelical churches now use grape juice instead of wine, but this practice is the result of attitudes about wine that began in the nineteenth century. Witnesses, including A.A. Hodge and RPCNA minister William Slater, testify to and dissent from, this change.

Objections to wine in the sacrament, especially the objection that drinking wine is a sin, are answered. Conclusions are listed. Proposals for action by the Synod are recommended. This paper ends with appendices about diluted wine, important historical witnesses (including the Westminster Standards), and a list of suggested readings.

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INTRODUCTION

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of Christ's greatest gifts to His Church.

In the Lord's Supper, Christ blesses His people in many ways. He calls His people to remember Him and His saving work, as often as they partake of it. Christ uses it to remind them of His coming again in glory for them. The people of God renew their covenant with Him. They commune with Him, as their ministers, acting in His name, administer the sacrament according to His appointment, to their own growth in grace. As they recall how all Christians eat from the same consecrated bread, they are reminded of the love and unity that bind all Christians in one body and one faith.

Yet, in what is surely one of the great tragedies of history, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper has become an occasion for confusion and division. For example, men of good will, professing the Bible to be their guide, have disagreed as to the exact nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. More recently, Christians have differed about the frequency of communion and the subjects of communion. But such matters are not subjects of concern within the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) at the present time, and so will not be considered here.

Instead, a different issue has attracted the attention of many elders and members within the RPCNA, namely, the issue of the content of the communion cup.

Should the communion cup contain wine, the fermented juice of grapes? Or should the cup contain unfermented grape juice? Does it matter? What difference does it make, if any? Should church leaders accommodate both Christians who want to use wine, as well as those who prefer unfermented grape juice, by offering what is sometimes called a "split cup" or a "split tray"? In other words, what should be the second "element," or the content of the communion cup? And how should such questions—controversial as they are—be answered? Is it even possible to answer them, and if so, how can we know our answers are true and correct?

Within the RPCNA every conceivable answer to these questions has been not only believed, but also put into actual practice. Some Christians do not partake of the Lord's Supper in some RPCNA churches, because their consciences do not allow this. Moreover, some ministers in the RPCNA find themselves unable to administer the sacrament in some RPCNA congregations, for reasons of conscience, because the practice of the hosting congregations is contrary to their beliefs. Some members and ministers are convinced that the practices of others in the RPCNA is improper or sinful. The result is not mere diversity, but confusion, disagreement, and disunity. Questions and doubts about the communion cup trouble the consciences of God's people, hinder saints from the blessing that should attend the observance of the Lord's Supper, occupy the courts, and hurt the life and witness of the RPCNA. Since it "belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience" (WCF 31.3), the Synod must act. The Synod must discover, declare, and apply the revealed will of God in this matter. The truth of God must not be evaded or ignored.

This paper is intended to help the Synod in these endeavors.

First, we will study a few Bible passages concerning the public worship of God in general. We do so for simple reasons. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NKJV). Worship is a “good work,” but we are not to lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Only the Bible can teach us how to worship God in a manner that pleases Him. All our worship, including our observance of the Lord’s Supper, ought to rest on a biblical foundation.

Second, we will study the Bible passages that concern the Lord’s Supper in particular. Rather than grow our discussion beyond all bounds, we will limit ourselves to what the Bible says about the contents of the communion cup.

Third, we will cite the statements of confessions, churches and men, always remembering that such human opinions are not equal to Holy Scripture, but can sometimes shed light on the meaning of Holy Scripture. We will seek to imitate the Bereans of Acts 17:11, who sought to examine what they had heard from even the best of God’s teachers in the light of the word of God. We will adopt what is biblical and profitable, and reject whatever is not.

Fourth, we will answer such objections as are commonly offered to the biblical teaching.

Fifth, we will try to give guidance to Christians—both leaders and laymen—who may be concerned about the effects of the biblical teaching on tender consciences and the unity of the Church.

While striving to meet these goals, we will seek to avoid all ancillary issues and questions. Lord willing, we will not allow ourselves to be distracted by topics that—while interesting—are not relevant to the matter at hand. We will concern ourselves almost entirely with one simple question: What should be the content of the communion cup?

A paper such as this one may seem unnecessary, because the Synod has already discussed these issues.² However, a comprehensive biblical and theological study has not yet been attempted. Faithful Christians should expect to be given answers that are founded on the bedrock of Holy Scripture and sound reasoning.

Only the Bible is inspired and infallible. Only the Bible can be the rule of our faith and practice. Where the Bible is silent, we will seek to be silent as well. Where the Bible speaks, we will seek to yield faithful obedience. Where it contradicts the opinions of men, or the practices of churches, we will say, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

² A paper similar to the present paper was presented to the Synod of the RPCNA in 2019, but the Synod did not study the paper; instead, it was simply returned to the Midwest Presbytery on June 11, 2019.

While we ought to give the decisions of previous synods all due consideration, we must remember that every synod is composed of fallible men. We should agree with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which teaches us that “The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” As it is with all controversies of religion, so it is with this one. Every previous decision or statement of the courts of the church must yield to Holy Scripture.

And so we begin. What do the Holy Scriptures teach about worship in general?

THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

"Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). "All the earth shall worship You And sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name" (Psalm 66:4). "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name" (Psalm 86:9). "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95:6). "Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:9). "Exalt the Lord our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the Lord our God is holy" (Psalm 99:9).

The only true God, who is the God of the Bible, must be worshipped. But how? What manner of worship is pleasing to Him? Is one method of worshipping God better than another? If so, what is it? How can it be discovered?

The Christian religion is a revealed religion. We can know God and His ways only as far as He is willing to make them known. Even mere human beings are known only as far as they make themselves known—how much more is this true of God! Thankfully, God has revealed Himself in the word of God. The pages of the Holy Scripture are God's own witness to Himself. For example, we know that He is holy, because He has revealed Himself to be holy. Similarly, we know that He created the universe, that He sent Jesus Christ to be an atoning sacrifice for us, that Jesus will return to judge the world in glory, that He saves us through His grace by faith, and that we should obey His laws—because He has revealed all this in His word.

In the same way, God has revealed the way His people should worship Him.

Regrettably, sinful human beings are often tempted to worship God in ways that do not please Him. They imagine new ways to worship God—ways that He has not revealed in His word. This danger can only be avoided by adhering to the worship God has revealed in His word. The Bible teaches us *the regulative principle of worship*. As this term suggests, our worship of God must be regulated by the word of God.

A few selected Bible passages make this clear. For example, after discussing the worship of God, Deuteronomy 12:32 says, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” The temptation to add or subtract from the worship of God is strong, but it must be resisted. Any substantive part of the worship of God requires a justification, or warrant, from the word of God.

Another passage teaches us the consequences of worshipping God in a way He has not commanded. “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.’ So Aaron held his peace” (Leviticus 10:1-3). Nadab and Abihu died after they added a human invention to the worship of God.

Colossians 2:20-23 says, “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.” The Bible condemns all “self-imposed religion” or “will-worship” (King James Version) as commandments and doctrines of men.

Jesus rebuked the woman at the well, because she and her fellow Samaritans “worship what you do not know.” “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24-25).

The Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes the regulative principle of worship. “But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.” The Westminster Larger Catechism 108 explicitly includes the sacraments, and says, “The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; **the administration and receiving of the sacraments....**” [emphasis added].

The Westminster Larger Catechism 109 says, “The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself...corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it...”

The regulative principle of worship is important for another reason. We are taught that “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). All of our worship must be from faith; otherwise, it is sin. So we must have faith that God will accept what we do in worship. But how can we have this faith? The Bible teaches us that faith must be rooted in the word of God. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Our faith that God receives our worship rests on the foundation of the word of God. Any worship not based in the Holy Scripture is not of faith; therefore, it is sinful. In other words, our confidence that God is pleased with our worship must be grounded in the word of God. We cannot know that God will bless our worship, unless our worship is biblical.

What has all this to do with the communion cup? Very much! The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is part—indeed, a central part—of the worship of God. All Christians are commanded to receive, observe, and keep it “as God hath instituted [it] in His word.” It would be a sin to corrupt it, add to it, or take from it. No matter what reason or reasons Christians may have for changing the Lord’s Supper, such changes stand condemned by God’s word. Christ is the only king of the Church, her only lawgiver, and faithfulness to Him requires biblical worship.

So we must ask: How did God institute the Lord’s Supper? Did Christ use wine? Did He use grape juice? Is it even possible for us to know what He used as the contents of the communion cup? Only a study of the word of God can answer such questions.

THE BIBLE DEFINES THE CUP

The Bible specifically mentions the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in five passages. They are Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-21, I Corinthians 10:16-17, and I Corinthians 11:17-34. Other passages of the Bible may refer to this sacrament indirectly, but we will not attempt to study those passages here. Indeed, even the five passages that specifically mention the sacrament will not be studied in detail, but only so far as they touch on the subject of the contents of the communion cup.

None of the five passages uses the word “wine.” Instead, other terms describe the communion cup and its contents. The first is “the fruit of the vine,” which is found in Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18. The second, and more specific term, is “this fruit of the vine” and is found in Matthew 26:29. The third is “the cup of blessing, which we bless,” and is found in I Corinthians 10:16. The remaining references are found in I Corinthians 11, where the communion cup is “this cup,” or “the cup,” or “the cup of the Lord.”

What do such terms mean? What do they tell us about the contents of the communion cup? To answer such questions, we must interpret them in accordance with sound principles of biblical interpretation. We must study the words themselves, in their original context, and consider their historical and cultural background, while resisting any temptation to import into the biblical texts our own biases or prejudices.

The Background: The Passover Meal

When we read the relevant Bible passages in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we are immediately struck with the fact that the Last Supper, and thus the institution of the Lord's Supper, took place within the context of the Passover meal. Understanding this context is crucial to understanding the contents of the communion cup.

We begin by citing the relevant passages. Matthew 26:7-29 mentions the Passover meal three times. "Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?' And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples." So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover."

Similarly, Mark 14:12, 14, 16 says "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?'...Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover."

Likewise, Luke 22:7-16 says "Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

The inspired authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke use the word "Passover" no fewer than a total of ten times to help us understand what Jesus said and did on the night He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This fact is noteworthy of itself. But to fully grasp the direct connection of the Passover meal to the words and events of that night, we ought to remember another prominent fact: At the time of the annual Passover celebration, Jesus Christ, "our Passover" lamb (I Corinthians 5:7) and the "lamb of God" (John 1:29), was about to be sacrificed for us.

The implication of these facts is inescapable: We cannot understand the words of Jesus apart from the Passover meal of His day.

Changes in the Passover Meal

The first mention of the Passover meal is found in Exodus 12. In this passage, the Passover is purposefully designed to remind the Israelites of an unique historical event, namely, the Exodus from Egypt.

However, the Passover meal changed over time. When Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples, about 1,400 years had passed.

J.B. Segal in *The Hebrew Passover: From the Earliest Times to 70 A.D.* wrote, “Most important, we find here [in Jubilees 49,³ circa 150 B.C.] the first allusion to the wine which became so prominent a feature of the Jewish Pesah [passover] meal... It is more likely that the introduction of wine at the Pesah meal was the effect of a radical change that was now taking place in the character of the Passover. It was to be no longer a solemn annual mustering of male adults; it was to become the occasion for family festivity, in which the drinking of wine found a natural place.”

The religious and cultural context in which Jesus lived and ministered is partially described by the Mishnah. The Mishnah is “a principal component of Judaism... The Mishnah was represented, soon after it was compiled [circa 200 A.D.]⁴, as the part of the ‘whole Torah of Moses, our rabbi,’ which had been formulated and transmitted orally, so it bore the status of divine revelation right alongside the Pentateuch.” (Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, page xiv)

The Passover Wine

The Mishnah is divided into sections; the Mishnah Peshaim is that part of the Mishnah which deals with the Passover. A full description of the Mishnah Peshaim is beyond the scope of this paper, but certain features are especially relevant to our discussion, so a lengthy quote is justified.

10: 1 A. On the eve of the Passover from just before the afternoon’s daily whole offering, a person should not eat, until it gets dark. B. And even the poorest Israelite should not eat until he reclines at his table. C. And they should provide him with **no fewer than four cups of wine**, D. and even if the funds come from public charity.

10:2 I A. When they have mixed **the first cup of wine**— B. The House of Shammai say, “He says a blessing over the day, and **afterward he says a blessing over the wine**.” C. And the House of Hillel say, “**He says a blessing over the wine**, and afterward he says a blessing over the day.”

10:4 II A. They mixed for him **a second cup of wine**. B. And here the son asks his father [questions].

10:7 III A. They mixed **the third cup** for him. B. He says a blessing for his food. IV C. [And at] the fourth, he completes the Hallel and says after it the grace of song. D. Between these several cups of wine, if he wants to drink, he may drink

³ “And all Israel was eating the flesh of the paschal lamb, and drinking the wine...” Jubilees 49.6.

⁴ Though the Mishnah was *compiled* about 200 A.D., it *consisted* of traditions from earlier times. Jubilees 49, which also mentions wine, dates c. 150 B.C. The Mishnah must not be confused with the Talmud.

wine. E. But between the third and **fourth cup of wine**, if he wants to drink, he may not drink. [Emphasis added]

The Mishnah Peshaim helps us to understand several aspects of the Passover meal, and, consequently, the Lord's Supper. First, four cups of wine were used. Second, the words "cup" and "wine" are used interchangeably. In this context, the word "cup," is simply a figure of speech for "wine."

"The Fruit of the Vine" and the Cup

In another passage, the Mishnah elucidates these terms even further, because the Mishnah uses the term "the fruit of the vine" as a synonym for "wine" in Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1. In its entirety, Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1 says,

- A. What blessing does one recite over produce?
- B. Over fruit of a tree he says, ["Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe] Creator of the fruit of the tree,"
- C. **except for wine.**
- D. **For over wine he says, "Creator of the fruit of the vine."**
- E. And over produce of the earth [vegetables] he says, "Creator of the fruit of the ground,"
- F. except for loaves [of bread].
- G. For over the loaf he says, "Who brings forth bread from the earth,"
- H. And over greens he says, "Creator of the fruit of the ground."
- I. R. Judah says, "Creator of kinds of herbs." [Emphasis added]

Later, the Talmud contributed to the Jewish understanding of the Passover. The Babylonian Talmud described the Passover wine: "R. Judah said: It must possess the taste and appearance of wine. Said Raba, What is R. Judah's reason? Because it is written, *Look not upon the wine when it is red.*"

According to this passage, the Passover must not only use wine—it must be red wine. The reason given is strange to modern ears, perhaps—the wine must conform to the description in Proverbs 23:31. Nevertheless, this passage from the Talmud is helpful, because it tells us that the wine must not only have the appearance, but also the taste, of the clearly alcoholic wine of Proverbs 23:31.

Only a few words later, the Babylonian Talmud explains the rationale for using wine in the Passover meal: "Our Rabbis taught: A man is in duty bound to make his children rejoice and his household rejoice on a Festival, for it is said, And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, [thou and thy son, and thy daughter, etc.] Wherewith does he make them rejoice? With wine. R. Judah b. Betera says, "...Now that the house of the sanctuary is no longer standing, the sole valid form of rejoicing is drinking wine: 'And wine gladdens the heart of man' (Ps. 104:5)"

On at least one occasion, the nature of this wine, combined with a regrettable abuse, produced a rather lamentable consequence: R. Judah bar Ilai drank four cups on

Passover and had a hangover until Tabernacles. According to the Talmud, the wine of the Passover was diluted with water. As Mishnah Peshaim 10 shows, the wine was “mixed,” again, probably with water. “The wine of the Last Supper, accordingly, may be described in modern terms as a sweet, red, fermented wine, rather highly diluted” (B.S. Easton, “Wine, Wine Press,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume V, page 3087).

Gustaf Dalman, in his *Jesus-Jeshua*, added further details about the wine used in the Passover:

Four cups of wine were in later times the minimum for the Passover meal. This was allegorically interpreted in different ways; e.g. four kinds of punishment to the heathen—to Israel four kinds of consolations. The fact is, however, that this amount was connected with a peculiar method of calculation. A ‘cup of blessing’ had to contain ‘a quarter of a quarter of a log’ of pure wine. Thus, four such cups contained a quarter of a log, i.e. one-eighth litre of pure wine, about the measure of a large modern wine-glass. The drinking of such a quarter of a log of wine was considered enough to make priests and judges temporarily unfit for their office. A whole log (= one-half litre), it says, caused intoxication, for, when Gamaliel II had drunk a quarter of a log of Italic wine he felt unable to undertake a case of dissolving a vow until he had ridden for three miles to let the intoxication pass off. Thus, the amount of wine drunk at a Passover meal was just enough to promote high spirits; that it would not lead to actual intoxication was taken for granted, as experience taught that wine caused intoxication only when drunk after, but not when drunk during, a meal. (Naturally, the effect of wine on those who were used to drink much was also known. One who was used to drink daily twelve xests (more than 6 litres) did not fall asleep if he only drank eleven.) Moreover, the avoidance of intoxication was also due to the fact that it was drunk at intervals. ‘The drunkard drinks in one draught, the decent man in two, the proud man in three.’ And yet some Rabbis spoke of the physical after-effects of the four Passover cups upon them: Rabbi Jonah felt his until Pentecost had come around; Juda ben Ilay until the Feast of Tabernacles.

It was taken for granted that the wine should be diluted with water. The strong Italic wine was mixed with three parts of water; so a cup containing one-sixteenth of a log of pure wine had to be large enough to contain three-sixteenths of a log of water and allow a space of one-sixteenth of a log free at the brim for drinking. For the weaker Palestinian Saron wine, mixed only with twice its quantity of water, smaller cups would suffice. According to Eliezer, the mixing was to be done before the benediction over the wine. At the Passover meal this was not performed at one time in a great vessel for the purpose, but at each cup, in order that every cup should be an entity in itself.

Is "the Fruit of the Vine" a Generic Term?

Some people have suggested that "the fruit of the vine" is a generic term, and includes both wine and unfermented grape juice.⁵ Is this assertion supported by the biblical evidence?

At first glance, "the fruit of the vine" certainly appears to be a generic term. After all, grapes are a fruit produced by vines; by extension, it could be argued, grape juice is also produced by vines; thus, grape juice is a fruit of the vine. Indeed, it might appear that grape juice has an even greater claim to the title of "the fruit of the vine" than wine does, since grape juice is a more immediate product of a vine than wine is; in other words, grape juice occurs before wine; true, wine comes from grape juice, but only after the passing of time.⁶

However, the phrase "the fruit of the vine" should not be interpreted according to our modern understanding of how grape juice and wine are produced. To do so is to violently wrest the term from its original context and to force it to mean what a modern speaker would mean if he used the same words. Sound principles of interpretation require us to ask, not, "In our experience, what fruits do vines produce?" but rather "How was the phrase 'the fruit of the vine' used and understood by Jesus and His hearers?" Only when we examine the phrase in its original context is a valid interpretation possible. The failure of some interpreters to give due consideration to the original context of "the fruit of the vine" has been the cause of much confusion and misunderstanding.

An analogy familiar to elders in the RPCNA is the words "hymns" and "songs" as we find these words in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. We have long recognized that to interpret these words as an ordinary American in the 21st century understands them would be to misinterpret them. It would even be a mistake to interpret these words (and their Greek equivalents) as an ancient Greek speaker outside of Judaism would have understood them, because such words were commonly used of uninspired musical or poetical compositions in ancient Greek culture. Instead, we ask ourselves, "What would the Apostle Paul and his readers have intended by the words 'hymns' and 'songs'?" In other words, what did the original author and original recipients of Paul's letters to Ephesus and Colossae understand by the words "hymns" and "songs"? In the same way, we must strive to understand the "hymn" of Matthew 26:30 in the light of the Jewish custom of singing the Hallel after the Passover meal. Do we not understand this "hymn" better after having considered the Jewish background? In all such cases, we must seek to understand the original context. When we have understood this context, we rightly conclude that neither "hymns" nor "songs" were generic terms, including both uninspired and inspired compositions, but were rather specific terms. And since these

⁵ The same idea is suggested by those who say unfermented grape juice falls within "the semantic range" of the word "wine" or the phrase "the fruit of the vine."

⁶ Should we not go even further, and argue that solid grapes have the best claim of all to be called "the fruit of the vine"? For grapes are the most direct product of the vine, and (unlike grape juice and wine) are not manufactured. But Jesus said to drink, not eat, "the fruit of the vine." As usual, sound interpretation requires us to consider the context, and not merely the sound of the words. As demonstrated below, "the fruit of the vine" is not merely an agricultural term, but rather a liturgical and technical term.

words had a specific meaning for the original authors and readers of Matthew 26:30, Ephesians 5:19, and Colossians 3:16, they also have a specific meaning for us.

Likewise, we must examine and consider the Jewish Passover customs when we seek to understand the biblical term “the fruit of the vine.” Why? Because the customs surrounding the Passover are a very important part of the original context.

We must remember that Jesus and His disciples did not live outside of time and history; rather, they lived within an unique cultural and historical setting. The time and place in which they lived and ministered were not accidents, created by chance; rather, they had been prepared in advance by God’s wise providence, and so were a part of His divine plan. Indeed, we can be sure that God predestined this particular cultural setting as best suited for His purposes. Furthermore, because Jesus and His disciples lived in first century Palestine, they inherited particular languages and a culture that had existed long before the Last Supper took place. The Jewish Passover rituals—including both set actions and liturgical formulae—were a long-established part of that culture. As a young man growing up in a pious Jewish family, Jesus had undoubtedly heard the words “the fruit of the vine,” and had seen and tasted the Passover wine, many times; the same can be said for His disciples. Then, throughout Jesus’s public ministry, Jesus and His disciples used the same languages and the same culture that they had inherited from their ancestors. When Jesus spoke, He spoke in a language understood by His disciples, and He utilized a culture that was familiar to them. Otherwise, communication (in the ordinary sense) would have been impossible. As a result of this shared culture and language, the disciples knew precisely what to do when Jesus said, “Prepare the Passover,” and Jesus could be sure they had done what He had intended when He spoke those words, because the Passover meal had been prepared by pious Jews in a particular manner for generations. Likewise, when Jesus said, “the fruit of the vine,” He was not inventing a new term. Nor did His disciples hear a term that was new or unfamiliar to them, because Jesus was using a term that had already existed, and had acquired a definite meaning, long before He uttered that term during the Last Supper. The words “the fruit of the vine” were a term the Jews had used as a part of the blessing over wine, the fermented juice of grapes, long before Jesus was born.

To repeat: We must interpret the words and actions of Jesus at the institution of the Lord’s Supper according to their original context.⁷ What was that context? As we demonstrated above, the original context was the Passover meal. The Jews of Jesus’s day drank four cups of wine during the Passover meal (Mishnah Peshaim 10:1). They pronounced a blessing over the Passover wine. Over wine they said, “Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine” (Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1). We have here the language of worship and liturgy. In other words, “the fruit of the vine” is a liturgical and technical term (*terminus technicus*), with a definite and specific meaning. Our concern is not, the fruit of the vine, considered as a product of the vines in a vineyard; but rather “the fruit of the vine,” considered as a part of the blessing the Jews said over wine during Passover. “The fruit of the vine” is not an

⁷ “In interpreting the Bible consideration must be given to the historical situation in which the passage was written, to the grammatical structure, and to the literary form.” Testimony 1.19.

agricultural or botanical term, and must not be interpreted today as if it were. The fact that “the fruit of the vine,” when taken out of context, may suggest a different meaning to modern speakers and hearers, ought not to hinder us from understanding this term correctly. Sound principles of biblical interpretation require us to consider the original meaning of the term, which was spoken in the context of the Jewish Passover meal. Only then can we understand the mind of Christ, when He said, “the fruit of the vine.”

The fact that “the fruit of the vine” is specific, not generic, becomes even clearer when we remember that Matthew 26:29 reports Jesus as saying, “**this** fruit of the vine.” Obviously, Jesus was not directing the attention of His hearers to an abstraction, or to a generality. Nor was He referring to something that did not exist six months after the grape harvest. Instead, Jesus was referring to a material that was physically and actually present on the table in front of Him. The word “this” (Greek: τοῦτου τοῦ) allows no other interpretation. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how Jesus could have chosen a more specific term.

And what was this physical and material object to which Jesus referred when He said, “this fruit of the vine”? We ought to remember that Jesus and His disciples were not standing in a vineyard, but in the upper room. The occasion was not the grape harvest, but the Passover. Before them was a table. What was on that table as Jesus spoke these words? It could only have been what had been placed there after “the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover” (Matthew 26:19, cf. Mark 14:16). Jesus referred to Passover wine.

This understanding of Matthew 26:29 then informs our understanding of “the fruit of the vine” in Mark and Luke. “This fruit of the vine” is specific and concrete, not generic; and since Matthew 26:29 illuminates--and does not contradict--the parallel passages in Mark and Luke, we understand that “the fruit of the vine” in Mark and Luke are also specific, not generic.

Once we consider all this, we are compelled to conclude that “the fruit of the vine” is wine, the fermented juice of grapes. It is not a generic term.

What About the Yeast?

Some people object to the concept of alcoholic wine in the Passover meal, on the ground that the regulations concerning the Passover forbade the presence of leaven, or yeast, in the house.

To answer, we must study the process used in making wine, the Mishnah, and the biblical passages concerning the Passover.

First, we must distinguish between the process of leavening, and the process of fermentation. These are very different things, and what is proper to say about the former, may be improper to say about the latter. Bread could be either leavened or unleavened, and the biblical passages that regulated the Passover meal required that it be unleavened. Wine, on the other hand, was fermented, not leavened; and the biblical

passages that require that unleavened bread be used at Passover say nothing at all about fermented wine, and do not forbid it.⁸ As modern men, versed in modern science, we are familiar with the common denominator in both leavened bread and fermented wine, namely, the action of microscopic yeast cells. But the ancient Israelites would have seen only the sights and smells of rising bread as it was baked on the one hand, and the tastes and smells of wine as it was left alone on the other. The Israelites would not have made the mistake of supposing that leavened bread is somehow similar or analogous to fermented wine, and that therefore a prohibition against one, is also a prohibition against the other. Nor should we.

Second, careful attention should be given to Numbers 28, which reminded the Israelites of the regulations concerning the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During the Feast, “unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days,” and on the first day of the Feast, animal and grain offerings were prescribed. However, Numbers 28:3-8 had already described the regular daily offerings, at which one lamb was offered in the morning and a second in the evening. It is important to note that at this daily offering, a drink offering of “one-fourth of a hin⁹ for each lamb” was also offered. (Exodus 29:40 teaches us that this drink offering consisted of wine.) Since this drink offering of wine was an everyday occurrence, it would have taken place during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In other words, the prohibition of leavened bread, and the command to offer wine in worship, existed side-by-side. The latter did not contradict the former.

Third, the yeast that was “not to be seen” among the Israelites evidently meant either the yeast in the bread (which had to be unleavened at the time of the Passover), or what may be called “loose” yeast, that yeast which had not entered anything. Nothing is said in the Mishnah Peshaim about removing wine from the home, though much is said about removing yeast. The search for yeast included a search around the wine vault, but it did not include a search of the wine itself.

Fourth, the prohibition against yeast on Passover may have involved only the five grains listed in Mishnah Pesahim 2:5.¹⁰ Since none of those are put into wine, there is no problem with the yeast that fermented the wine.

⁸ See Exodus 12:33-42, Exodus 13:3-10, and Deuteronomy 16:2-4. These passages explain why the bread must be unleavened. Exodus 12:39 says the Israelites did not add leaven to their bread, “because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait.” Deuteronomy 16:3 says, “seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with [the Passover], that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day.” This hurry to leave Egypt would not have prevented the fermentation of grape juice, because grape juice ferments anywhere and without human hands.

⁹ A hin was a unit of liquid measure. “One-fourth of a hin” was probably about one quart or one liter.

¹⁰ Rev. Dunlop Moore wrote, “Drinks made of five specified kinds of grain are forbidden during the Passover. But drinks of the fermented juice of grapes and other fruits, when carefully prepared by Israelites, are lawful. It is amazing what false statements regarding the wine of the Passover are put forward by those who ought to have taken greater care to ascertain the truth.” *An Argument Maintaining the Wine Proper for the Communion* (Philadelphia, 1888). Moore’s essay is reproduced in Appendix F.

Fifth, we should also note that the process of fermentation, used to make wine, did not require the introduction of yeast by man. Rather, the naturally occurring yeast on the skins of the grapes and in the surrounding air was sufficient to begin the fermentation process. Then, since yeast cells multiply rapidly, this small (and undetectable) amount of yeast was enough to produce the alcoholic content of the wine.

Sixth, while the start of the process of fermentation required the presence of yeast, fermentation would have eventually killed the yeast in the wine. Yeast cannot survive in an environment rich in alcohol. Since the process of fermentation required only a few days to complete, no yeast would have been present in wine more than a few days old. Thus, a Passover meal using unleavened bread and wine contained no yeast.

In addition, RPCNA minister William Slater answered the objection regarding yeast many years ago, and his words deserve careful consideration. "It is alleged that the wine used in the passover by the ancient Israelites, must have been unfermented, because there was to be no leaven in their houses at that time. Ans. 1st. We have no evidence that the Israelites in early times used wine in the passover at all. There is no mention of it in the original institution, so that all reasoning from the [original] passover is perfectly nugatory. 2nd There is no command against material leaven in the Lord's Supper. 3d. At the same time that leaven was prohibited in the offerings of God, wine was commanded. In the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink-offering. Num. xxviii. 7. What sad work was this! that wine, containing leaven and alcohol, and what not, should have been offered to God!"

Modern Scholars

Modern scholars have examined the evidence and have drawn the obvious conclusions.

In his book, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, Joachim Jeremias says, "το γηνημα της αμπελου ('the fruit of the vine') for 'wine' is in the Judaism of the time of Jesus a set liturgical formula at the blessing of the cup, both before and after the meal." Therefore, Jeremias says, "Jesus and his disciples drank *red wine* at the Last Supper."¹¹

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod asserted that, "According to the Talmud the Passover cup contained a mixture of three parts water to one part wine (Peshaim 108b); this was to decrease its power of intoxication...Evidently our Lord partook of some kind of wine in the Passover observance" ("Study Committee on the Beverage Use of Alcohol Report." *Documents of Synod: Study Papers and Actions of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod—1965-1982*)

"All four accounts of the Lord's Supper speak of 'the cup.' The content of this cup was most definitely wine. The references in Matt. 26:29 and parallels to the 'fruit of the vine' would not have suggested anything else to Jesus' listeners than the grape wine of the Jewish Passover ritual." (*Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, 1983, The

¹¹ The scholars in this section observe that "the fruit of the vine," as it was used in the Mishnah, is the same phrase Jesus used. However, similar phrases appear in LXX Deut. 22:9, Is. 32:12, and Hab. 3:17.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod)

R.T. France, in a commentary entitled *The Gospel of Matthew* and published by Eerdmans in 2007, on page 995, in footnote 34, wrote, “‘Fruit of the vine’ is a traditional term used in the formal thanksgiving for wine. (*m. Ber.* 6:1)”

“In the accounts of the Last Supper the term οἶνος [the Greek word for wine] occurs neither in the Synoptists nor Paul. It is obvious, however, that according to custom Jesus was proffering wine in the cup over which He pronounced the blessing; this may be seen especially from the solemn γενημα της αμπελου (Mark. 14:25 and par.) which was borrowed from Judaism.” (Seesemann, “οἶνος,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume V, page 64. “γενημα της αμπελου” is translated as “fruit of the vine.”)

“Mark. 14:25 (Mt. 26:29; Lk. 22:18): γενημα της αμπελου, is to be equated with פֶּרִי הַיַּיִן, which occurs in the blessing of the paschal cup in Ber., 6, and T.Ber., 4, 3... The expression of the Evangelists is particularly close, therefore, to contemporary Judaism.” (Friedrich Büchsel, “γενημα,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume I, page 685)

Commentator William Hendriksen, in his *The Gospel of Matthew*, says, “By speaking of ‘the fruit of the vine’ Jesus undoubtedly refers to wine. Note close relation between ‘vine’ and ‘wine’ in Isa. 24:7. See also Num. 6:4; Hab. 3:17. At this time of the year (April), and under conditions then prevailing in Judea, it is hard to think of anything but fermented grape juice, that is, wine, the kind of wine used at Passover; hence, diluted or paschal wine.” (page 911)

In his book *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Leon Morris wrote, “Jesus took a cup, and though Matthew does not mention the contents specifically ... the meaning is a cup containing wine.” “Jesus speaks of ‘this fruit of the vine,’ which clearly means ‘wine.’” (pages 661-662)

Likewise, the famous New Testament scholar D.A. Carson wrote, “The ‘fruit of the vine’ is a common Jewish way of referring in prayers to wine (cf. *m Berakoth* 6:1).” (*Matthew-Mark*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, revised edition, Vol. 9, page 604)

Similarly, R.C.H. Lenski, in his commentary, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* said, “The efforts that are put forth to read wine out of this account are unavailing. Because οἶνος, the word for ‘wine,’ does not occur, the presence of wine is at least gravely questioned, which means practically denied. Luke’s ‘the fruit of the vine,’ pherihagiphen, the lovely liturgical term for the wine that was used in the Passover ritual, which Matthew makes even more specific by writing ‘this fruit of the vine,’ the one that was regularly used in the Passover and was used at this Passover by Jesus, is misunderstood by these commentators, for they assert that grape juice fits this phrase better than does wine--although such a thing as grape juice was an impossibility in April

in the Holy Land of Christ's time. It could be had only when grapes were freshly pressed out, before the juice started to ferment in an hour or two." (pages 1043-1044)

Summary

"The fruit of the vine" in the biblical accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper is wine, the fermented juice of grapes. That is what the term meant for Jesus and His disciples, and that is what it must mean for us. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He used wine.

THE CUP IN I CORINTHIANS

To gain a fuller understanding of the contents of the communion cup, we should study the evidence from I Corinthians 10:16 and 11:21-34.

I Corinthians 10:16

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (New King James Version)

Something has already been said about the term "The cup of blessing [Greek: το ποτηριον της ευλογιασ] which we bless." These words are clearly an allusion to a similarly worded passage in Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1. It should be noted that "Berakhoth" simply means a benediction, or a blessing. Different blessings were prescribed for different occasions. Specifically, Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1, line D, prescribed the blessing given for wine.

A complete quote of Mishnah Berakhoth 6:1 is justified:

- A. What blessing does one recite over produce?
- B. Over fruit of a tree he says, ["Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe] Creator of the fruit of the tree,"
- C. **except for wine.**
- D. **For over wine he says, "Creator of the fruit of the vine."**
- E. And over produce of the earth [vegetables] he says, "Creator of the fruit of the ground,"
- F. except for loaves [of bread].
- G. For over the loaf he says, "Who brings forth bread from the earth,"
- H. And over greens he says, "Creator of the fruit of the ground." I. R. Judah says, "Creator of kinds of herbs." [emphasis added]

Over a cup filled with wine, the Jews were to bless the Lord, by saying, "Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."

The Jewish custom was the source of Paul's designation of "the cup of blessing." Regarding I Corinthians 10:16, Leonhard Goppelt wrote, "The eucharistic formula handed down in the community (1 C. 10:16), from which Paul draws conclusions about participation in pagan feasts (vv. 17-22), takes over from Jewish table practice the term το ποτηριον της ευλογιασ...and calls the eucharistic cup the cup of blessing" ("ποτηριον" [cup], *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume VI, page 156).

I Corinthians 11:21-26

A complete study of this passage is well beyond the scope of this paper; we allude to it only because it teaches us something definitive about the contents of the cup. Why? Because some of the Corinthians became drunk. According to I Corinthians 11:21, "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk." In the original Greek this passage says, "εκαστος γαρ το ιδιον δειπνον προλαμβανει εν τω φαγειν και ος μεν πεινα ος δε μεθυει."

The key words here are the last words of the verse in both English and Greek, namely, "drunk" and "μεθυει." (The Greek word "μεθυει" is often transliterated into English characters as "methuei.") Some have suggested that the Greek word usually translated as "drunk" should be translated as "surfeited" or something similar instead. But where is the evidence for this? The Greek word μεθυει, as it is used in I Corinthians 11:21, comes from the word μεθω. According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by Walter Bauer, the Greek word "μεθω" is simply defined as "be drunk." The same word appears in different forms in Acts 2:15, Ephesians 5:18, and I Thessalonians 5:7, where it clearly means to "be drunk." Since this is the case, we are not surprised to learn that every major English version uses the word "drunk" to translate "μεθυει" in I Corinthians 11:21. Moreover, the Greek word μεθυει is the present active indicative of μεθω. The Greek present tense "vividly points out the action that was in progress" and may "point to a habitual action" (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, by Fritz Reinecker and Cleon Rogers).¹²

The following examples of I Corinthians 11:21 in modern translations should suffice:

- for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (American Standard Version)
- for when you eat, each one hurries to get his own supper first [not waiting for others or the poor]. So one goes hungry while another gets drunk. (Amplified)
- For each one in eating takes his *own* supper before [others], and one is hungry and another drinks to excess. (Darby)
- for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. (English Standard Version)
- For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (King James Version)

¹² It should be noted in this place that the Westminster Confession, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism cite I Corinthians 11:23-26 as proof that real wine should be used in the Lord's Supper. For a fuller discussion about this passage as a proof text, see the appendix.

- but your own. For I am told that everyone hastily gobbles all the food he can without waiting to share with the others, so that one doesn't get enough and goes hungry while another has too much to drink and gets drunk. (The Living Bible)
- For when it comes time to eat, each one goes ahead with his own supper; and one remains hungry while another becomes drunk. (Mounce)
- for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. (New American Standard Bible)
- for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. (New International Version)
- for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. (New International Version, UK)
- For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. (New King James Version)
- For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. (New Revised Standard Version)
- For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. (Revised Standard Version)
- for why each man before taketh his supper to eat, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (Wycliffe)
- for each his own supper doth take before in the eating, and one is hungry, and another is drunk; (Young's Literal Translation)

We must conclude that the church in Corinth used wine, not grape juice, at the time they observed the Lord's Supper. Paul criticized some, not for using wine in the Lord's Supper, but for becoming drunk by drinking wine to excess.

WINE IN THE BIBLE

The word "wine" appears about 220 times in every major English version of the Bible.

So, to truly understand the Bible, we must understand what it says about wine. This is especially true when we want to understand the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. What place does wine, and wine consumption, have in the Bible? What place did it have in the culture in which Jesus lived and ministered? What did wine, and the drinking of wine, mean, to Jesus and His disciples? Such questions as these will help us to understand the place wine occupied, if any, in the original institution of the Lord's Supper.

A complete study of wine in the Bible is beyond the scope of this paper. Many volumes have been written about the subjects of wine, wine consumption, winepresses, vines, vineyards, grapes, wineskins, new wine, beer, strong drink, and drunkenness. No

attempt to be exhaustive will be made here. However, a few things need to be said, so that we can understand the Lord's Supper and the communion cup.

How Was Wine Used?

The Old Testament has two main Hebrew words for wine. The first of these is *yayin*, which is commonly translated as "wine." The second is *tirosh*, which is sometimes translated as "new wine." A few other Hebrew words, such as *shekar*, usually translated as "strong drink" or "beer," appear far less frequently. The New Testament normally uses the Greek word *oinos* for wine. The Greek word *gleukos* appears only in Acts 2:13, and is usually translated as "new wine."

"New wine," contrary to popular opinion, was not unfermented grape juice, because the ancient Israelites lacked the technology to preserve grape juice in an unfermented state. "The term 'new wine' does not indicate wine which has not fermented, for in fact the process of fermentation sets in very rapidly, and unfermented wine could not be available many months after the harvest..." (F.S. Fitzsimmonds, "Wine and Strong Drink," *New Bible Dictionary*, Second Edition, Tyndale, 1982). "But unfermented grape juice is a very difficult thing to keep without the aid of modern antiseptic precautions, and its preservation in the warm and not overly clean conditions of ancient Pal[estine] was impossible" (B.S. Easton, "Wine, Wine Press," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume V, page 3086). "There was no non-alcoholic wine in the Last Supper. Ancient vintners could not, even if they wanted, produce non-alcoholic beverage" (Magen Broshi, *email September 18, 2005*). Even in America, not until Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch perfected his pasteurization techniques in 1869, was unfermented grape juice widely available for use in the sacrament. At the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper, for all practical purposes, unfermented grape juice simply did not exist. That "new wine" was alcoholic is further evidenced by another observation: Hosea 4:11 tells us "wine and new wine enslave the heart." "New wine" was probably simply the product of the most recent grape harvest, as opposed to older wine from previous grape harvests. It's "newness" consisted simply in this: It had been newly produced.

The inability of first century vintners to prevent fermentation—which began almost immediately and was complete in a few days—is of special significance when we consider the contents of the communion cup. Why? Because the grape harvest was in the fall, and the Passover meal (and hence, the institution of the Lord's Supper) took place in the spring. Unfermented grape juice at the time Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper was a physical impossibility. This fact is of crucial importance when we seek to determine the contents of the communion cup.

Wine had a number of uses, according to the Bible. In order of importance, they are:

1. Wine was used as a drink or beverage, often as part of a meal. Wine was an ordinary part of the diet. Wine is itself a food, in the broadest sense, because it contains important nutrients. For this reason, it sometimes appears alongside other foods, especially bread (e.g. Genesis 14:18, Genesis 27:37, I Samuel 1:24, I Samuel 25:18, II Samuel 16:2).

2. Wine was sometimes used to enhance mood (Psalm 104:15, Judges 9:13); thus, it was welcomed as a benefit and a blessing (Genesis 27:28, 37; Proverbs 3:10). The loss of wine was a judgment of God on His people for their sins (Hosea 2:9). Because wine was a benefit, it could be compared to other benefits, whether of a material or a spiritual nature (Song of Solomon 1:2, 4; 7:9; Proverbs 9:5, Isaiah 55:1). Because wine enhanced mood, a few passages in the Bible warn against drunkenness and its effects (Ephesians 5:17, Proverbs 20:1, Proverbs 23:29-35).
3. Wine was used to promote health, either by being consumed internally, as in I Timothy 5:23, or by being applied externally, as in Luke 10:34. Cf. Proverbs 31:6.
4. As an element used in Old Testament worship (e.g. Exodus 29:40, Leviticus 23:13, Numbers 15:5-10; 28:14).
5. As a metaphor, wine could be used to denote the banquet that the people of God will enjoy with God at the end of history. Amos 9:13-14 promises, "Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When the plowman will overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine, And all the hills will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit.'" Similarly, Isaiah 25:6 predicts "A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees."
6. As a metaphor for the wrath of God. This follows naturally from the fact that wine, when used to excess, can make one sick or deprive one of his abilities. Important examples of such passages are Matthew 26:39 (where the wine is not explicit, but implied), Hosea 4:11, Hosea 7:5, Zechariah 12:2, and Revelation 14:10.

At least some of these uses, perhaps even all, would have informed the minds of Jesus and His disciples when Jesus gave the communion cup to His disciples.

Is Wine Sinful?

Is the act of drinking wine a sin?¹³ It is important to answer this question, for if drinking wine is a sin, wine has no place in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

On the other hand, if drinking wine is not a sin, then the only important objection to the use of wine in the Lord's Supper is null and void.

All Christians agree that drunkenness is a sin. This is clear from passages such as Ephesians 5:17, which commands us, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

But what of the moderate (as opposed to the excessive) consumption of wine? Is even the moderate consumption of wine a sin?

A careful study of such passages as Numbers 6:20c, Numbers 15:5, Deuteronomy 14:23-26, Psalm 104:14-15, Luke 7:33-34, John 2:3-11, Romans 14:21 and I Timothy

¹³ We are not presently concerned with *circumstances* or *times* in which the drinking of wine *becomes* a sin. The question might be rephrased as, "Is the act of drinking wine *in itself* a sin?" or "Is it *per se* a sin?"

5:23 should be sufficient to answer this question. All eight are quoted below, and a few comments are appended to each.

Numbers 6:20c

After that the Nazirite may drink wine (Hebrew: *yayin*).

[Comment: Numbers 6:1-21, of which the words “After that the Nazirite may drink wine” are a part, contains the requirements for the Nazirites. Nazirites could be either men or women. During the time of their vow, every Nazirite was required to “separate himself from wine and similar drink.” However, this requirement was only in force as long as the time for the Nazirite vow continued. Ordinarily, sooner or later, the period of consecration for the Nazirite would someday be over, and then he or she would simply be another member of the community, like everyone else. At that point, what may he or she do? “After that the Nazirite may drink wine.” God explicitly permitted former Nazirites to drink wine. What God permits, we cannot forbid. It is not a sin to drink wine.]

Numbers 15:5

and one-fourth of a hin of wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb.

[Comment: By the time Numbers 15 was written, wine had become an ordinary part of the worship of God. Numbers 28:14 is a similar passage.]

Deuteronomy 14:24-26

But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) or similar drink (Hebrew: *shekar*; King James Version, English Standard Version: *strong drink*; New International Version: *other fermented drink*), for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.

[Comment: As in Numbers 15, wine is an important part of the worship of God. Here, however, the wine could be consumed by the worshipper. “Strong drink” was also intended to be consumed, if the worshipper so chose. Either the wine or the strong drink was a means of rejoicing. Keil and Delitzsch comment that the Israelites were to “hold a joyous meal.”]

Psalms 104:14-15

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 (Hebrew: *yayin*) that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man’s heart.

[Comment: In his commentary on this passage, John Calvin said, “In these words we are taught, that God not only provides for men’s necessity, and bestows upon them as much as is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life, but that in his goodness he deals still more bountifully with them by cheering their hearts with wine and oil. Nature would certainly be satisfied with water to drink; and therefore the addition of wine is owing to

God's superabundant liberality." Calvin alluded to Psalm 104:15 and wine's "gladdening" features in his catechism's answer about the Lord's Supper, saying, "As by wine the hearts of men are gladdened, their strength recruited, and the whole man strengthened, so by the blood of our Lord the same benefits are received by our souls." The contents of the communion cup should remind us that God has abundantly provided for our salvation, even far beyond what is necessary, thus gladdening our hearts.]

Luke 7:33-34

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, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

[Comment: John the Baptist was a remarkable figure for many reasons, but our present purpose requires us to confine our comments to his diet; he abstained from both bread and wine. Here, Jesus contrasts Himself with John the Baptist in this particular; from this we are compelled to conclude that Jesus ate bread and drank wine. It is sometimes said that Jesus (who never sinned) did not drink wine, because drinking wine is a sin. We should rather reason that, since Jesus drank wine, drinking wine is not a sin.]

John 2:3-11

And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 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!"

[Comment: Jesus miraculously turned water into wine; furthermore, Jesus obviously intended the wine to be consumed and enjoyed. At celebrations, wine is appropriate, because it elevates the mood of the celebrants, and enhances conviviality.]

Romans 14:21

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

[Comment: In a chapter about liberty of conscience, the Apostle Paul reminds us that drinking wine, like eating meat, can be an occasion of stumbling for weaker consciences. But the fact that Paul mentions the drinking of wine alongside the eating of meat proves that the drinking of wine is not a sin in itself. Just as the strong are ordinarily permitted to eat meat, even if it was devoted to idols (I Corinthians 8), so they are ordinarily permitted to drink wine. Romans 14:21 also implies that this same wine is

alcoholic, since the drinking of unfermented grape juice cannot be an occasion of stumbling for weaker consciences.]

I Timothy 5:23

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

[Comment: The inspired Apostle Paul told Timothy to drink wine for the sake of his health. We may well wonder how drinking wine would have been conducive to Timothy's health; a number of explanations are possible here; for example, the water in Timothy's area may have contained sickening microbes, and the wine he mixed with his water may have killed these. However that may be, two things should be obvious: 1) the drinking of wine was, indeed, beneficial to Timothy's health; and, 2) Paul would not have instructed Timothy to commit a sin, even if it had been beneficial to his health; therefore, drinking wine is not a sin. Some may say the medicinal use of alcohol is an exception to a general prohibition; but has this been proven? And if the medicinal use is an exception, why is not the Lord's Supper also an exception, since we see that it is medicine for our souls?¹⁴]

I Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God 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.

[Comment: Unlike the previous passages, I Timothy 4:1-5 does not expressly mention wine. However, I Timothy 4:1-5 clearly applies to the subject of wine, because wine is a food. Indeed, it was commonly used as a food during the time of Jesus and His apostles. Furthermore, wine is also a "creature of God;" as such, it "is good" and to be "received with thanksgiving."]

However, four passages in the Bible have often been adduced to prove that, in fact, the moderate consumption of wine is a sin. While a complete study of any of these passages is beyond the scope of this paper, all four deserve to be quoted in full, and all four passages warrant a few comments. To be sure, other passages are sometimes used, but an answer to assertions about these passages will surely suggest an answer to the others.

Proverbs 20:1

Wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) is a mocker, Strong drink (Hebrew: *shekar*) is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

¹⁴ Dunlop Moore, in his "Sacramental Wine" in *The Presbyterian Review* (January 1882) wrote, "Greek and Roman physicians concurred with Jewish in holding every kind of must to be hurtful to the stomach. Pliny's statement, N. H. xxiii. 18, *mustum omne stomacho inutile*, expresses the universal judgment of antiquity." The notion that *alcoholic* wine would have hurt Timothy's stomach is unsupported by evidence.

Proverbs 21:17

He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) and oil will not become rich.

Proverbs 23:29-35

Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has contentions? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
Those who linger long over wine (Hebrew: *yayin*),
Those who go to taste mixed wine.
Do not look on the wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup,
When it goes down smoothly;
At the last it bites like a serpent
And stings like a viper.
Your eyes will see strange things
And your mind will utter perverse things.
And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,
Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast.
“They struck me, but I did not become ill;
They beat me, but I did not know it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink.”

Proverbs 31:2-7

What, O my son?
And what, O son of my womb?
And what, O son of my vows?
Do not give your strength to women,
Or your ways to that which destroys kings.
It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
It is not for kings to drink wine (Hebrew: *yayin*),
Or for rulers to desire strong drink,
For they will drink and forget what is decreed,
And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.
Give strong drink (Hebrew: *shekar*, New International Version: *beer*) to him who is perishing,
And wine (Hebrew: *yayin*) to him whose life is bitter.
Let him drink and forget his poverty
And remember his trouble no more.

As we examine passages, we ought to remember four things:

1. These passages cannot and do not contradict the teaching of such passages as Deuteronomy 14:24-26, Luke 7:33-34 and John 2:1-10, since God—who cannot lie—is the author of all the Holy Scriptures.
2. When faced with an apparent contradiction in the Holy Scriptures, the faithful interpreter should interpret the less clear passages in the light of the more clear passages.
3. We should remember the special genre we find in Proverbs. Proverbs is a unique book, with unique characteristics, and the failure to note this fact is the cause of much mischief.¹⁵ As often happens in the book of Proverbs, what is described is the folly that results from the misuse or excessive use of a thing, not the mere use of a thing. Proverbs warns us against excessive sleep, work, food, and speaking; but it does not forbid the absolute use of sleep, work, food, and speaking.
4. In each of these passages from Proverbs, we are warned against the effects of excessive consumption of alcohol, not its moderate use. We are warned—not against the wine itself—but rather the mocking and the loss of wisdom (Proverbs 20:1), the poverty (Proverbs 21:17), the sorrows, the illusions, the lack of understanding (Proverbs 23:20-31), and the lack of sound judgement (Proverbs 31:2-7) that characterize those who overindulge. While such warnings ought to be taken seriously by every Christian, they do not touch those who drink wine in moderation. For example, he who is “led astray” by wine or beer is not the same as he who merely consumes a small amount. As another example, “he who loves wine and oil” (Proverbs 21:17) is surely not in the same category as he who merely uses wine and oil; or are we to believe that all use of—not only wine, but oil as well—is sinful?

The True Cause of Drunkenness

We must remember that drunkenness, like other sins, is the work of the human heart. For this very reason, it finds its place alongside such sins as envy and witchcraft in Galatians 5:21. Wine is not the cause of sin. Here, as always, “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man” (Matthew 15:11). Sin does not inhere in material objects, for God created all things (Revelation 4:11). Recalling that wine is a kind of food, we must heed the instruction of I Timothy 4:1-4, which warns us against false teachers who will “command us to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”

We can only understand drunkenness when we understand the true character of sin, and we will find no rest from such sins as drunkenness until we learn that God’s answer to sin lies in the Gospel of Christ, and not more law.

¹⁵ In his book *Exegetical Fallacies*, pages 137-138, D.A. Carson wrote, “One of the most common errors preachers make in the area of literary genre occurs in their handling of Proverbs. A proverb is neither a promise nor case law.” “In other words, proverbs often demand meditation, subtle reflection on the circumstances under which the proverb applies...rather than simplistic promises or the like.”

Furthermore, candid students of the Holy Scriptures should note that we have no command from God to prevent the fermentation of grape juice. Indeed, no one in the Bible expresses even a desire to prevent such fermentation. Since the Holy Scriptures are our only infallible guide to faith and practice, this silence must instruct us. No Christian or church is morally obligated to prevent fermentation before using it.

The “Two Wine Theory”

Some proponents of total abstinence, aware that the Bible often speaks of wine in a positive light, have suggested what is sometimes called “the two wine” theory. They suggest that wine is a generic term, and a term that includes both fermented and unfermented grape juice. When wine is spoken of in a positive light, it is unfermented; when it is spoken of in a negative light, it is supposedly fermented.

How should the honest interpreter of the Holy Scriptures respond? We make the following observations:

1. Surely the burden of proof lies with those who claim that the word "wine" (and its Hebrew and Greek equivalents) contains both fermented wine and unfermented grape juice. If someone were to assert that "wine" can mean wine, but also coffee or tea, would we not be right to observe the burden of proof lies with the one asserting such a thing, and require an uncontested example of such an use of the word? In the same way, it seems only fair to suggest that the burden of proof lies with those who say "wine" can mean unfermented grape juice. And surely we are correct to ask, Has this burden of proof been met? If so, where?
2. The “two wine theory” would seem to require not only two meanings for the English word “wine,” but also two meanings, one alcoholic and the other non-alcoholic, for all the Greek and Hebrew words now interpreted as denoting alcoholic beverages in the Bible, if those words sometimes mean something positive. For example, the “two wine theory” must document two kinds of *oinos*, two kinds of *tirosh*, two kinds of *yayin*, two kinds of *shekar*, two kinds of the “fruit of the vine,” etc. This is an impossible burden.
3. The “two wine theory,” by itself, does not solve the underlying problem it is trying to solve. If we grant the premise, that “wine” is a generic term, including both wine and unfermented grape juice, the conclusion that the drinking of fermented wine is sinful does not follow. For it must still be proven that the fermented wine is actually evil, or at least necessarily evilly used.
4. Experience has shown that proponents of the "two wine" theory begin with a bias or prejudice against wine. This bias then becomes a prism through which they view the biblical passages about wine, wine consumption, and the contents of the communion cup. To a degree, we can sympathize. For who does not come to the Holy Scriptures with bias? Still, we do them no harm to point out such bias and the danger it poses to sound interpretation. An interpreter who begins with the belief that even moderate consumption of wine is sinful will find confirmation of this belief everywhere he looks, and the Bible will not be allowed to speak for itself. At every step of interpretation, confirmation bias is an evil to be avoided.
5. The “two wine theory” appears to be based on a logical fallacy. This fallacy is sometimes known as the “no true Scotsman” logical fallacy. In the “no true

Scotsman” fallacy, the advocate makes what could be called an appeal to purity as a way to dismiss relevant criticisms or flaws of his argument. To illustrate: Angus declares that Scotsmen do not put sugar on their porridge, to which Lachlan points out that he is a Scotsman and yet puts sugar on his porridge. In return, Angus yells that no *true* Scotsman sugars his porridge (<http://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/no-true-scotsman>). Likewise, the “two wine” proponent says that no fermented wine brings about a good or positive result. If anyone suggests that Psalm 104:15, John 2:3-10, Luke 7:33-34, and I Timothy 5:23 yet portray wine in a positive light, the “two wine” proponent simply retorts that these are not examples of *true* wine, but rather unfermented grape juice; herein lies the fallacy of the “two wine” theory.

6. The history of the nineteenth century temperance movements teaches us that the "two wine theory" is a comparatively new way to interpret the Bible passages concerning wine.¹⁶ While this consideration, by itself, does not invalidate the "two wine theory," we ought to ask ourselves whether the "two wine theory" is the result of a better understanding of God's word, or simply the consequence of man-made efforts to support new and unbiblical views of wine, temperance, and drunkenness. If the "two wine theory" is a valid approach, why did it not occur to the church before the nineteenth century? Is it based on the Holy Scriptures?
7. Many things in the Bible have good effects at one time, but have bad effects another time. In such cases, responsible interpreters of the Bible do not posit two very different kinds of the same thing. For example, sleep has both good effects (Ecclesiastes 5:22, Jeremiah 31:26) and bad effects (Proverbs 6:9,10; 24:33). Yet, nobody thinks the Bible teaches a “two sleep” theory. Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness as an instrument for healing (Numbers 21), and as a foreshadowing of the cross of Christ (John 3:14), but it later became an instrument for idolatry (2 Kings 18); yet the bronze serpent was a single thing. David used a sword to cut off the head of one of God’s enemies, but swords were also used by the crowd that arrested Jesus. Manna nourished the Israelites forty years in the wilderness, but on another occasion it had spoiled and was infested with maggots, yet no one thinks manna is a generic term, containing within it both good and bad manna. The gospel is the aroma of life to those who are saved, but the aroma of death to those who are perishing; yet, we feel no compulsion to think of two different gospels. Perhaps the best example is honey, for we read “eat honey because it is good” (Proverbs 24:13), but it “is not good to eat much honey” (Proverbs 25:27); yet no one suggests a “two honey” theory. Differing effects of things do not imply that the things themselves differ. The same thing can have different effects or results, depending on the manner, time, place, or circumstances in which it is used. We need not, and should not, resort to a “two wine” theory to explain the biblical data.

¹⁶ “More than thirty years ago, a section of the active promoters of total abstinence...by a new and unprecedented exegesis of the Scripture teachings respecting wine...They undertook to show that the wines of Scripture were of two kinds, fermented and unfermented...This interpretation was new to the church...” “The Wine of the Bible, of Bible Lands, and of the Lord’s Supper” *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (October 1871, page 565). See also *The Two-Wine Theory Discussed by Two Hundred and Eighty-Six Clergymen, on the Basis of “Communion Wine,”* by Edward H. Jewett (1888).

8. A much better explanation for the fact that wine sometimes has good effects, and sometimes has bad effects, is easy to find. Wine is a substance that is easily abused, usually by overindulgence. The depictions of the drunkard we often see in Holy Scripture remind us that such abuse has doleful consequences, and is a sin unworthy of the people of God. Just as gluttony is the result of abuse of food, not the use of the wrong kind of food, so drunkenness is the result of the abuse of wine, not the use of the wrong kind of wine.

Wine and the Cultural Bias

Since the teaching of Holy Scripture about wine and wine drinking is so clear, how can we account for the wide-spread, and sometimes vehement, opposition to wine in our churches?

The historical record shows that alcoholic beverages were very popular and commonplace in America during the 17th and 18th centuries, but attitudes about wine began to change during the 19th century.¹⁷ The rapid rise and widespread influence of the Temperance movements, beginning about 1830, both reflected and promoted this change. Some of these movements were secular, while others were religious; some relied on moral persuasion, while others were willing to use the coercive power of the state. Protestant churches were very much involved in these movements. Gradually, the new attitudes about wine had affected not only popular culture, but churches and Christians as well. By 1900, most evangelical churches, including the RPCNA, had abandoned the use of wine in the sacrament, and had replaced it with unfermented grape juice. (The Lutheran and Episcopal churches were exceptions.)

In our own day, Christians and churches have been either unwilling or unable to free themselves from a cultural bias against wine and wine drinking. As a result, it is almost impossible for modern Christians to regard wine the same way Jesus and His disciples regarded it. Furthermore, modern attitudes about wine have so permeated our churches that sound principles of biblical interpretation¹⁸, ecclesiastical authority, and freedom of conscience have sometimes been surrendered or compromised, simply for the sake of maintaining a discredited view of wine. These developments have hurt the church. We need a reformation. These attitudes should be brought to the bar of Holy Scripture.

We must conclude that the moderate drinking of wine is not a sin. No objection to the use of wine in the Lord's Supper, if it is based on the notion that the drinking of wine is a sin, can be sustained.

¹⁷ For changes in attitudes about wine, see *Alcohol in Western Society from Antiquity to 1800: A Chronological History*, by Gregory A. Austin, especially pages xxii-xxv. See also *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*, by W.J. Rorabaugh and *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform*, by Jack S. Blocker. The effects of the new attitudes on the cup are discussed by Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait in *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism*.

¹⁸ Attempts were made to reconcile the Bible with the new attitudes. See "The Bible and the American Temperance Movement: Text, Context, and Pretext," by John L. Merrill in the *Harvard Theological Review* (April 1988) 81, 2: 145-170.

THE WINE AS A SYMBOL

The Wine is a Symbol

We must always remember that the wine in the Lord's Supper is a *symbol*. The wine directs our attention to something else. What does the wine symbolize?

The Blood of Jesus and its Benefits

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He gave the cup to His disciples, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Obviously, Jesus was speaking symbolically, and not literally, when He said, about the contents of the cup, "This is my blood." The cup did not contain Jesus's literal blood, but only symbolized His blood.

In fact, we may go even further and say that the content of the cup did not merely refer to the blood of Jesus itself, but also to the benefits and the saving effects of that blood, which was poured out for our salvation at the cross. The very words Jesus used demonstrate this; for He did not merely say, "This is my blood," but also that it was "of the covenant" and "for the forgiveness of sins." In this connection, it is important for us to realize that the Lord's Supper is about the *application* of redemption, and not simply the *accomplishment* of redemption. The bread and the cup are *given to us*, and the bread and the cup are *received by us*, just as salvation is given to us, and received by us. As Jesus said, the sacrament is "for you." When we observe the Lord's Supper, we are told not only what Jesus did, but also the significance of what He did for us.

As wonderful as it is to contemplate these truths, we are taught others in the sacrament, just as wonderful. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and the Apostle Paul taught us that "as often as you do this, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again." The most important facts in the universe are being taught to us and communicated to us in the sacrament. For this reason, we should carefully consider how and what the objects in the sacrament—the bread and the cup—communicate to us.

The Symbol is Like the Thing It Symbolizes

The best symbols are the ones that bear some similarity to the thing they symbolize. For example, the door leading to a men's restroom might have the figure of a man on it, because only men should walk beyond that door; similarly, the door to the women's restroom has the figure of a woman on it. The picture of a gun inside a black circle, with a bold black line from upper left to lower right across the gun, teaches us that guns are prohibited here. This way of communicating is so effective that mere children, or even people who don't understand English words, can understand it. On the other hand, symbols that bear no similarity to what they symbolize—a triangle in place of the gun, for example, or a straight line for the man—would not be effective ways to communicate. We see this principle in action in the sacrament of the baptism, because nothing in all the universe is more suited than water to teach us that God, by the blood of Christ, cleanses sinners from the guilt and power of sin.

What then do the bread and the cup teach us? Since the Lord chose symbols, not words, it may not be possible to express this in words. Still, we surely approach an answer to this question, if we remember that the best symbols are similar to the realities they symbolize. The bread symbolizes the body of Christ, and our receiving of it symbolizes the nourishment and sustenance we get from the broken body of Christ. Likewise, the wine of the communion cup symbolizes the blood of Christ, and our receiving of it symbolizes the abundance of joy and revival we get from the shed blood of Christ.

John Calvin astutely observed:

And so as we previously stated, from the physical things set forth in the Sacrament we are led by a sort of analogy to spiritual things. Thus, when bread is given as a symbol of Christ's body, we must at once grasp this comparison: as bread nourishes, sustains, and keeps the life of our body, so Christ's body is the only food to invigorate and enliven our soul. When we see wine set forth as a symbol of blood, we must reflect on the benefits which wine imparts to the body, and so realize that the same are spiritually imparted to us by Christ's blood. These benefits are to nourish, refresh, strengthen, and gladden. For if we sufficiently consider what value we have received from the giving of that most holy body and the shedding of that blood, we shall clearly perceive that those qualities of bread and wine are, according to such an analogy, excellently adapted to express those things when they are communicated to us.¹⁹

In other words, wine is the symbol God has chosen for teaching us what God intends for us to know: that we must receive our salvation with joy and gladness.

"Right" vs. "Almost Right"

Choosing the right symbol is not always easy. People whose chief occupation is communicating know how difficult it is to choose a symbol or a word (words being themselves a kind of symbol) to represent a reality they want their readers or hearers to understand. Such symbols or words must be adapted not only to the thing they symbolize, but even to the capacity of the readers or hearers. For example, would it be better for the preacher to say "tithes" or "ten percent"? Would it be better for the translator of Romans 3:25 to write that Jesus was "a sacrifice of atonement" or "a propitiation"? Would it be better to pray "Hallowed be thy name" or "Your name is holy"? Does the school teacher educate "pupils" or "students"? Some people might think that to ask such questions is to quibble about trivial matters; but Mark Twain was undoubtedly correct when he said, "The difference between the right word and the *almost* right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." The right word (or symbol) is much, much better than the *almost* right word or symbol. The former communicates the fullness of the reality; the latter can obscure or even distort it. Remembering this helps

¹⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (1559) in *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vols. XX-XXI, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 4.17.3. Cf. Luther, *Sermon on Confession and the Eucharist*.

us to understand the objects used in the Lord's Supper, for God chose the right symbols. God did not choose symbols that are *almost* right.

Modern Attitudes about Wine Hinder the Message

Sadly, modern attitudes about wine prevent us from receiving the message conveyed by this symbol. For modern man, living after the stupendous cultural changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, wine is more a curse than a blessing. We hear of drunk drivers, and cirrhosis of the liver, and we cringe. Little wonder, then, that grape juice is often considered as a more than adequate substitute. But it was not always so, and it need not be so in the future. For the Bible, while in no way minimizing the danger of drunkenness, teaches us that the wine is a blessing, a constituent part of a happy communal meal with family and friends, an instrument of joy (Psalm 104:15), an anticipation of the eschatological meal with Christ (Isaiah 25, Amos 9), and yes, a reminder that the cup of God's wrath is bitter. This is what God said about wine, and this is what we must consider when we think of wine as a symbol in the Lord's Supper. That we fail to discern these truths—even at the very moment we ought to remember them most—is not to be put to wine's account, nor to God's.

We Need the Right Symbol

We can, and should, try to describe and explain our glorious salvation, both to our fellow Christians and to the unbelieving world around us. We should use whatever words (or symbols) God has permitted us, in His wise providence, for us to use. But in the end, we know that our words cannot do full justice to the reality. Our understanding is too feeble, and our words are too inadequate. We take comfort in this: God has condescended to communicate the heavenly realities to us, in a way suited to both the truths of our salvation and our limited capacity, by giving us bread and wine. We can be sure that every property or characteristic of both the bread and the wine are appropriate for this purpose, because God so designed them. The sight, the feel, and the taste of the bread teach us. Likewise, the sight, the smell, the feel, and the taste of the wine teach us. It may not be possible for us to express in human language how they do so, or precisely what meaning these things convey; if they could have been expressed in words, presumably God Himself would have so expressed them. But God specifically chose wine and bread, because bread and wine alone will serve His purpose. None of the aspects of bread and wine can be absent, lest we be impoverished. We can no more neglect them than we can neglect the Lord's Supper itself. Everything about bread and wine is necessary and essential to help us learn what God will teach us through them.²⁰ Just as we ought not to allow words to be taken from our Bibles, or water taken from our baptisms, so we ought not to allow the symbols of bread and wine to be taken from the sacrament.

²⁰ Westminster Larger Catechism 174 teaches us to "diligently observe" the elements in the Lord's Supper. We should meditate on the wine as a symbol whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, including the wine's essential characteristics and properties. This perspective is not compatible with the notion that the content of the communion cup is an indifferent matter, or that a cup containing something other than real wine can produce the same effect in the hearts of believers. We must observe real wine in the cup.

It is sometimes argued that, while Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper using wine, unfermented grape juice is an acceptable facsimile. In the light of what we have said already, we see that this argument fails. Grape juice cannot serve as an adequate symbol, because it is not similar to what it symbolizes, and so fails to properly communicate. If we use unfermented grape juice instead of wine, God's communication to us, and our understanding of that communication from Him, is hindered or stymied. As a result, our own concepts of what Jesus did for us can be truncated, and our Christian experience is diminished or retarded. These are consequences no Christian should tolerate.

Nothing less than the symbols God chose for us will do. Nothing less can serve God's glory and our need. The symbols He has chosen are the lightening for our souls; anything else is a mere lightening bug.

THE STANDARDS OF THE RPCNA

The title page of the Constitution of the RPCNA says, "The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America: Being Its Standards Subordinate to the Word of God: The Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Testimony, the Directory for Church Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory of Public Worship. Together with Official Vows and Forms".

We must briefly study those passages in the RPCNA Constitution that are relevant to the subject of the communion cup.

As he reads what follows, the careful reader will note that the following confessional, catechetical and historical documents do not avoid the issue of wine in the Lord's Supper by using such terms as "the cup," which some people might consider a safe alternative, while still using biblical terminology; rather, while not avoiding the word "cup," they also use the unambiguous and specific term, "wine." In some cases, these confessional documents use the words "cup" and "wine" interchangeably, which clearly reflects their understanding that the communion cup contains wine. (Hereafter, the author has used bold typeface wherever the word "**wine**" appears, so that readers of this page can find the word more easily.)

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29, 3

The Lord Jesus, hath, in this ordinance, appointed His ministers to declare His word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and **wine**, and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29, 5

The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to Him crucified, as that, truly, yet sacramentally only, they are

sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and **wine**, as they were before.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29, 6

That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and **wine** into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29, 7

Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and **wine**; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 168

Q. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and **wine** according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is shewed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 169

*Q. How hath Christ appointed bread and **wine** to be given and received in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?*

A. Christ hath appointed the ministers of his Word, in the administration of this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to set apart the bread and **wine from common use**, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer; to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the **wine** to the communicants: who are, by the same appointment, to take and eat the bread, and to drink the **wine**, in thankful remembrance that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed, for them.²¹

²¹ Westminster Larger Catechism 169 teaches us that the wine should be set apart from "common use" to a holy use. The substance itself does not undergo a change between the time it is common wine and the time it is used in the sacrament. In other words, the content of the communion cup should simply be the same substance as that which is commonly called wine and commonly used as wine. It would be contrary to our standards to "denature" the wine, prevent fermentation, or otherwise deprive the wine of its essential properties, e.g., its alcoholic content, for then it would no longer be the same substance that is commonly called wine and commonly used as wine. Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 29, 3 and 29, 5. As Francis Turretin wrote, "Common wine is instituted..."

Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 170

Q. How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?

A. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal or carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 177

Q. Wherein do the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?

A. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ, in that Baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 96

Q. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Directory for the Worship of God, Chapter 3, The Administration of the Sacraments, The Lord's Supper

10. The Lord's Supper is to be observed regularly, as often as the Session may decide. The elements are bread and wine, representing the body and blood of Christ, and the sacramental actions performed by the pastor signify His incarnation, His consecration to His saving work, His suffering and death upon the cross, and His offer of Himself as Savior.

Directory for the Worship of God, Chapter 3, The Administration of the Sacraments, The Lord's Supper

14. The pastor shall give instruction as to the institution, nature, and purpose of the Lord's Supper, drawing attention to the words of institution in I Corinthians 11:23-26.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be observed until He comes again, in remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself which He offered upon the cross. The physical elements of bread and wine represent the body and blood of the Savior, and are received by true believers as signs and seals of all the benefits of His sacrifice.

None of the constitutional documents mention unfermented grape juice; therefore, we must conclude that the use of unfermented grape juice is not authorized by the Constitution of the RPCNA.

As these quotes demonstrate, the Westminster Confession Faith, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism teach that the content of the communion cup must be wine a total of 12 (twelve) times. Together, they teach that “Christ hath appointed the ministers...to set apart...wine from common use...and to give...the wine to the communicants...who are...to drink the wine...” (Westminster Larger Catechism 169, selected). Indeed, wine is included in the very definition of the Lord’s Supper, for we read, “The Lord’s Supper is a Sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine...” The Constitution of the RPCNA teaches us that wine must be used in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.²² Nothing could be clearer.

The Definition of the English Word "Wine"

Some people, eager to avoid the force of the above, have suggested that the English word “wine” is a generic term, meaning both the fermented juice of grapes, but also unfermented juice. In response, we invite the reader to consider the definition of “wine” as listed in a few reliable dictionaries. The reader will soon discover that “wine,” as used in the above confessional and historical documents, can only mean “the fermented juice of grapes.”

Some readers will be especially interested in the first example, because it is a citation from the dictionary by Samuel Johnson.²³ Since it dates from the mid-eighteenth century, it is not affected by any bias from the temperance movements.

Readers who want to delve even deeper into the meaning of the English word "wine," especially as it is used in the Westminster Confession of Faith, are advised to study how the word "wine" was used in the King James Version of the Bible. The King James Version was published in 1611, and so the translators of the King James Version moved in the same world of ideas as the Westminster Assembly. In addition, a complete history of the word can be found in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

²² Testimony 26, 6 says, “Because drunkenness is so common, and because the intemperate use of alcohol is constantly being promoted by advertising, business practices, and social pressure, Christians must be careful not to conform to the attitudes and the practices of the world with regard to alcoholic beverages. To prevent damage to our neighbor, to provide mutual help in godly living, and to strengthen each other in living a disciplined life it is altogether wise and proper that Christians refrain from the use, sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages.” It is obvious that this passage applies to the use of alcohol as a beverage, not to its use in the Lord’s Supper. This distinction was affirmed by the Synod in 1857 and 1992.

²³ Some students have accorded Samuel Johnson’s dictionary the honor of being the first dictionary in English. Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabeticall* was published much earlier; however it contains comparatively few words, and omits a definition for the word “wine.”

A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers.

by Samuel Johnson, The Sixth Edition, published in 1785, Volume 2, Page 1068
<https://archive.org/stream/dictionaryofengl02johnuoft#page/n1067/mode/2up>

WINE n.

1. The fermented juice of the grape.

[Below this definition, Johnson then cites examples of this use of the word "wine" in Shakespeare, the Bible, Bacon, Sandys, Milton, Pope, Herbert, and Swift; these examples are omitted here for the sake of brevity.]

2. Preparations of vegetables by fermentation called by the general name of *wines*; have quite different qualities from the plant; for no fruit, taken crude, has the intoxicating quality of *wine*.

Arbutnot

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged

Wine, *n.* [ME. win; AS. Win, from L. vinum, wine.]

1. the fermented juice of grapes, used as an alcoholic beverage and in cooking, religious ceremonies, etc.; wines vary as to color (red or white) and sugar content (sweet or dry), may be effervescent (sparkling) or non-effervescent (still), and are sometimes strengthened with additional alcohol (fortified).

2. the fermented juice of other fruits or plants, used as a beverage; as dandelion wine.

3. intoxication, as from wine. Noah awoke from his *wine*. --Gen.ix.24.

4. a wine party; specifically, at an English university.[Brit.]

5. a dark, purplish red resembling the color of red wines.

6. In pharmacy, a medicinal solution in which wine is the solvent.

Birch wine; see under *birch*.

Heavy oil of wine; see ethereal oil of wine, under ethereal.

New wine in old bottles; something new that is too potent to be confined in old bottles; something new that is too potent to be confined in old forms: see Matt. ix. 17.

Spirit of wine; alcohol.

To drink wine ape; to drink enough wine to make one silly. [Obs.]

Oxford Online Dictionary

<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/wine>

Wine1

NOUN

1. An alcoholic drink made from fermented grape juice.

'he opened a bottle of red wine,' 'the regional foods and wines of France'

1.1 [with modifier] An alcoholic drink made from the fermented juice of specified other fruits or plants

'a glass of dandelion wine'

1.2 short for **wine red**

[in combination] *'a wine-colored suit'*

We must conclude that the word “wine,” as it appears in the Constitution and our standards, means simply the fermented juice of grapes. The definition does not include unfermented grape juice.²⁴

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCHES

In addition to the RPCNA, other reformed churches have declared their judgments concerning the use of real wine in the Lord’s Supper.

The [Westminster] Directory for the Publick Worship of God (1645) OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE COMMUNION, OR SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

After this exhortation, warning, and invitation, the table being before decently covered, and so conveniently placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it, the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and **wine** set before him, (the bread in comely and convenient vessels, so prepared, that, being broken by him, and given, it may be distributed amongst the communicants; the **wine also in large cups**.) having first, in a few words, shewed that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer.

The [RPCNA] Directory for the Worship of God (1945)

The form to be used is: “Bless so much of the elements of bread and **wine** as shall be used on this occasion, which we hereby set apart from a common to a sacramental use, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.”

The Heidelberg Catechism Question 78.

Do then the bread and **wine** become the very body and blood of Christ? Answer: Not at all: but as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, neither is the washing away of sin itself, being only the sign and confirmation thereof appointed of God; so the bread in the Lord's supper is not changed into the very body of Christ; though agreeably to the nature and properties of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ Jesus.

The Belgic Confession, Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

To represent to us this spiritual and heavenly bread Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body and **wine** as the sacrament of his blood.

²⁴ A few modern dictionaries offer “a substitute for wine” or the like as a secondary part of the definition for “wine,” but these are a decided minority, obviously influenced by the temperance movements. Furthermore, in every such case, we are faced with an impropriety, because a thing is not a substitute for itself. We must consider the historical contexts within which the various dictionaries were written. The older definition for the word “wine,” as it appears in the standards, is not affected by the newer.

The Scottish Confession of Faith (1560) Chapter 22. Of the Right Administration of the Sacraments

For Christ Jesus said, Take, eat, etc. Do ye this in remembrance of me. By which words and charge he sanctified bread and **wine**, to be the sacrament of his body and blood, to the end that the one should be eaten, and that all should drink of the other; and not that they should be kept to be worshipped, and honoured as God, as the blind Papists have done heretofore, who also committed sacrilege, stealing from the people the one part of the sacrament: to wit, the blessed cup.

The Thirty-Nine Articles (1562, Modernized) XXVIII.

Of the Lord's Supper Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and **Wine**) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

While the Holy Scriptures alone are our rule for faith and practice, we can gain much insight by studying the opinions of the best teachers and theologians on the question of whether wine or grape juice should be used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Here are a few. Readers in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America will be especially interested in the article by RPCNA minister William Slater, which is found below.

Cyprian (c. 200 A.D.-258 A.D.)

Know then that I have been admonished that, in offering the cup, the tradition of the Lord must be observed, and that nothing must be done by us but what the Lord first did on our behalf, as that the cup which is offered in remembrance of Him should be offered mingled with wine. For when Christ says, "I am the true vine," the blood of Christ is assuredly not water, but wine; neither can His blood by which we are redeemed and quickened appear to be in the cup, when in the cup there is no wine whereby the blood of Christ is shown forth, which is declared by the sacrament and testimony of all the Scriptures.

And the cup of the Lord in such wise inebriates, as Noe [Noah] also was intoxicated drinking wine, in Genesis. (*Epistle LXII* [to Caecilius])

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

When somebody inquired whether, when a sick person wished to have the sacrament but could not tolerate wine on account of nausea, something else should be given in place of the wine, the doctor [Martin Luther] replied, "This question has often been put to me and I have always given this answer: One shouldn't use anything else than wine. If a person can't tolerate wine, omit it [the sacrament] that no innovation be made or introduced. (Martin Luther's *Table Talk*: Abridged from Luther's Works, Volume 54, Winter of 1542-1543)

John Calvin (1509-1564)

M. But why is the body of our Lord figured by bread, and his blood by wine?

S. We are hence taught that such virtue as bread has in nourishing our bodies to sustain the present life, the same has the body of our Lord spiritually to nourish our souls. As by wine the hearts of men are gladdened, their strength recruited, and the whole man strengthened, so by the blood of our Lord the same benefits are received by our souls. (“Catechism of the Church of Geneva”, *Calvin’s Selected Works*, edited by Beveridge and Bonnet, Volume 2, page 89)

First, the signs are bread and wine...just as bread and wine sustain physical life, so are souls fed by Christ...his blood was once so shed for us in order to be our perpetual drink (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter XVII, 1, translated by Battles)

Francis Turretin (1623-1687)

Common wine is instituted, of indifferent color, undiluted with water because it is called simply the “fruit of the vine” (Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25). (*Institutes*, Volume 3, page 431)

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

By wine as prescribed to be used in this ordinance [the Lord’s Supper], is to be understood ‘the juice of the grape;’ and the ‘juice of the grape’ in that state which was, and is, in common use, and the state in which it was known as wine. The wine of the Bible was a manufactured article. It was not the juice of the grape as it exists in the fruit, but that juice submitted to such a process of fermentation as secured its preservation and gave it the qualities ascribed to it in Scripture. That oinos in the Bible, when unqualified by such terms as new, or sweet, means the fermented juice of the grape, is hardly an open question. It has never been questioned in the Church, if we except a few Christians of the present day. And it may safely be said that there is not a scholar on the continent of Europe, who has the least doubt on the subject. Those in the early Church, whose zeal for temperance led them to exclude wine from the Lord’s table, were consistent enough to substitute water. They were called Tatiani, from the name of their leader, or Encratitae, Hydroparastatae, or Aquarii, from their principles. They not only abstained from the use of wine and denounced as ‘improbos atque impios’ those who drank it, but they also repudiated animal food and marriage, regarding the devil as their author. They soon disappeared from history. The plain meaning of the Bible on this subject has controlled the mind of the Church, and it is to be hoped will continue to control it till the end of time. (*Systematic Theology*, Volume III, page 616)

A. A. Hodge (1823-1886)

What is the meaning of the term oinos, wine, in the New Testament, and how does it appear that wine and no other liquid must be used in the Lord’s Supper? It is evident from the usage of this word in the New Testament that it was designed by the sacred writers to designate the fermented juice of the grape.—Matt.ix.17; John ii. 3-10; Rom. xiv.21; Eph. v.18; 1 Tim. iii.8; v. 23, Titus ii.3. This is the established testimony of all

competent scholars and missionary residents in the East. (*Outlines of Theology*, page 633)

As to the elements. These are—(a.) Bread. This is essential, because it is in the command; and because bread, as the staff of life for the body, is the proper symbol of that spiritual food that nourishes the soul... (b.) Wine; that is οἶνος, the fermented juice of the grape. Matt. ix. 17; John ii. 3-10; Rom. xiv. 21; Eph. v. 18; 1 Tim. iii. 8; v. 23; Titus ii. 3. This is made essential by the command and example of Christ, and by the uniform custom of the Christian Church *from the beginning*. (*The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding The Westminster Confession*, page 358)

William Slater

[The following article by William Slater will be of special interest to ministers and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). According to Glasgow's *History*, William Slater was licensed by the Pittsburgh Presbytery of the RPCNA on June 1, 1842. He was installed as the pastor of the Miller's Run congregation near Venice, Washington County, Pennsylvania on May 24, 1843. He resigned almost 44 years later, on April 13, 1887. What follows is an article by Slater that appeared in *The Reformed Presbyterian* periodical in 1850. We may not agree with each and every point Slater proposes here, but the importance of his witness to the actual practice of the RPCNA during his lifetime is beyond dispute. The first full paragraph of what follows was written by the editor, and is itself useful reading.]

SHOULD FERMENTED WINE BE USED IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

We cheerfully give place to the following article, hoping that, coming from the quarter it does, it may tend to check the introduction of another element of discord into our church. We know that the view opposed by the respected author is held, and has been publicly advanced, by more than one of the esteemed brethren who have been active in introducing, and urgent in pressing some of the subjects, the agitation of which has so greatly marred the peace of our Zion, alienated the affections of brethren, and weakened the mutual confidence that formerly prevailed. We dread the addition of other topics of controversy to those already existing, believing that the fruits will be bitter.—
ED.

A few years ago, Covenanters would have thought the above question ridiculous. But I lately heard one of our ministers endeavor to prove the negative; as I thought his reasoning fallacious, I propose to prove the affirmative.

1. The Hebrew word which we translate wine, when not qualified by some adjective, *always* in scripture means *fermented* wine. There is no exception. In Judges ix.13, and Psalm civ. 15, wine is said to cheer the heart, but *must* has no such tendency.

2. The New Covenant blessings which are conveyed to believers in the Lord's Supper are represented by fermented wine, Prov. ix.2, Is. xxv. 6. It is alleged that the phrase "*wines on the lees well refined*," no more proves that we should use fermented wine in the Supper, than the phrase "*fat things full of marrow*" proves that we should use

marrow and fat. The reply is easy. Simply considered, it proves nothing; but taken in connection with Christ's example, it is conclusive: for, certainly, had Christ used marrow and fat in the sacrament, we should do the same. He used wine, but not marrow and fat, and therefore, so do we.

3. Christ used the *fruit of the vine—the juice of the grape*, for they could not drink the grapes themselves.

4. When the apostle reprove the Corinthians for their abuse of the Lord's Supper, he says, one is hungry and another is drunken, 1 Cor. xi.21. From this it is evident that the Corinthians used fermented wine. For the use of this the apostle does not reprove them; but for its abuse. We must certainly believe that if they had used the wrong sort of wine, he would have told them so; but he does not so much as hint any such thing. My brother was so sensible of the force of this argument, that he alleged the word was not properly translated. He said, it was derived from the word that in Ps. xxxvi. 8, is translated *abundantly satisfied*. Now I do not think that the Greek word used by the apostle is derived from any Hebrew root; but it is the word by which the Septuagint renders the word in Ps. xxxvi. 8. It may be questioned, however, whether it be a happy translation, as it would be rather unusual to be drunk with fatness. The truth of the matter is this: of the two Greek verbs *methuo* and *methusko*, the first is neuter, and signifies, I am drunk; the second, active, I make drunk; they are so nearly allied that both are the same in the future tense active. Both are derived from *methu*, wine. I have examined all the passages in the New Testament, where drunk, drunkenness and drunkard occur, and find they are all derived from one or other of these verbs. I conclude, therefore, that our translation is correct, and that the Greek word in 1 Cor. xi. 21, (*methuei*,) means drunk with wine, and not surfeited with meat. The argument then remains in its full force, viz: The Corinthians used wine which caused drunkenness; the apostle does not reprove them for drinking such wine, but only for drinking to excess. From this we learn what sort of wine the apostolic churches used in the sacrament, viz: fermented.

5. We are commanded to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, Song i. 8, and to follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Now it cannot be disputed that from the earliest times of Christianity, the Church has used fermented wine in the Lord's Supper.

Let us now consider some of the objections offered against our view of the subject.

1. It is alleged, that it is wrong to use alcohol, unless for a medicine. Ans. This is begging the question. *That* is the point to be proved. This would exclude the use of *must*, as well as wine; for it contains the alcoholic principle, and it needs only to come in contact with the atmosphere, to produce fermentation. This principle is recognized in Num. vi. 3, where the Nazirite is forbidden to eat grapes, green or dried, or to drink anything that cometh of the vine.

2. It is said that the Jews use *must* at the passover. Ans. With the practice of the modern Jews I have no concern.

3. It is alleged that the wine used in the passover by the ancient Israelites, must have been unfermented, because there was to be no leaven in their houses at that time. Ans. 1st. We have no evidence that the Israelites in early times used wine in the passover at all. There is no mention of it in the original institution, so that all reasoning

from the passover is perfectly nugatory. 2d There is no command against material leaven in the Lord's Supper. 3d. At the same time that leaven was prohibited in the offerings of God, wine was commanded. In the holy place shalt thou cause the *strong wine* to be poured unto the Lord for a drink-offering. Num. xxviii. 7. What sad work was this! that wine, containing leaven and alcohol, and what not, should have been offered to God!

4. It is alleged by some that when Christ is speaking of the fruit of the vine, he alludes to grapes lying on the table, out of which they pressed the wine into the cup. Fresh grapes in the beginning of April! I had thought the Jews put their grapes into a press to extract the juice. We read in Gen. xl. 11, of a man that saw this in a dream: but dreams are not always according to what takes place in real life. Perhaps, the thought was a wicked one, but I could not forbear thinking, that the man must be dreaming who could picture to himself the Redeemer and his disciples pressing the juice out of the grapes into the cup at the sacramental table.

But to settle this matter definitely, viz: whether it be lawful to use fermented wine, let us examine Luke v. 36. That the passage may be intelligible to common readers the following observations may be useful:

A gentleman, who had been recently in Judea, told me that the inhabitants cut out a certain extent out of the rock for a wine press, and now, as formerly, tread the grapes with their feet. Their bottles are made thus:—having killed a goat, they strip off the skin; with the hair inward, they fill it with sand, to keep it from shrinking; when it is thoroughly dried, they fill it with new wine, or *must*, and in these bottles carry it to Smyrna, where it is put into vats to be fermented. What they use at home is fermented in the skin bottles. It appears that anciently they hung the bottles in the smoke, to accelerate the fermentation. Ps. cxix. 83. So we see, that till this day, they put new wine into new bottles that can bear the fermentation.

It will be said by some, that Christ alludes to the Jews' custom of fermenting their wine, without either approving or condemning the practice. Not so. He cites it as a vindication of his own conduct; and thus gives it his most decided approbation.

The speaker to whom I allude gave it as his opinion, that *must* would be better suited to the design of the Lord's Supper than old wine. As I never tasted *must*, I do not pretend to be a connoisseur in the matter; but He who makes the wine, and who, when he was on earth used it, has said "the old is better." In short, I do not pretend to be wiser or holier than the Head of the church, or than the flock that has gone on before us. "Remember them—who have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Heb. xiii.7. W.S.

Keith A. Mathison, Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformation Bible College, summarized the evidence from church history when he wrote, "For the first 1,800 years of the church, the use of wine in the Lord's Supper was an undisputed and noncontroversial practice. It was the universal practice of Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants alike. It remained the universal practice for so long only because the use of wine in the New Testament descriptions of the Lord's Supper is so unambiguously clear. The substitution of grape juice had its origins, not in the study of

Scripture, but in the capitulation of much of the American evangelical church to the demands of the nineteenth-century temperance movement."²⁵

OBJECTIONS

A few common objections are often advanced against the use of real wine in the Lord's Supper. We answer some of those here.

OBJECTION 1: "The words Jesus used, namely, 'the fruit of the vine,' are a generic term. Therefore, we are free to use either wine or unfermented grape juice, because both wine and grape juice are 'the fruit of the vine.'"

ANSWER: The assertion that "the fruit of the vine" is a generic term is not supported by any evidence or proof. Those who say that "the fruit of the vine" is a generic term should be required to show us one unambiguous example in which "the fruit of the vine" denotes something other than wine, the fermented juice of grapes. In the meantime, we must follow the evidence wherever it leads us; as we saw on pages 10-12 of this paper, that evidence compels us to conclude that "the fruit of the vine" can only mean one, specific thing. Jesus was very clear and specific when He gave us His instructions for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Jesus said, "Do this," not "Do something new, if ye so choose." He said, "Drink ye all of it," not, "Drink ye your own inventions." He said, "This fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29), not "Whatever alleged 'fruit of the vine' you choose." Sadly, the biblical term "the fruit of the vine"--and thus the word of God--is being distorted, instead of being merely received with meekness and a child-like faith.

OBJECTION 2: "I have heard that some ancient writers, such as Pliny the elder, knew ways to preserve grape juice in an unfermented state."

ANSWER: Why should we think these ancient writers are more credible than our modern authorities? The unbiased experts in ancient technology, who we may safely assume are familiar with these ancient writers, tell us that ancient vintners were both unwilling and unable to prevent fermentation. Why would we doubt these experts? Does anything more than an unfounded bias against wine motivate these doubts? We admit that we should give the ancient witnesses all the consideration they deserve; nonetheless, we cannot accept much of what they said. They were fallible. They could, and did, make mistakes. We must remember that they tell us not what they *knew* to be true, but only what they *believed*. Through no fault of their own, they were ignorant of science. Pliny said he knew of a race of men who had no mouths; he called them *Astomi*, and said they had no need of food or drink. Pliny said he knew of another race of men, each of whom had only one foot. Likewise, Pliny and others like him were

²⁵ Mathison, Keith. *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, page 298. See also Michael S. Horton, "At Least Weekly: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and of its Frequent Celebration," *Mid-America Theological Journal* 11 (2000) 147-169. On page 168, Horton wrote, "[W]e must ask ourselves why we refuse to use the element that the Savior and King of the church prescribed, viz., wine. Abandoning wine in favor of grape juice was unknown in the church until American Prohibition...[M]any of us have nevertheless argued that fermentation is not essential to wine. This argument was unknown to our forebears, as it was to Scripture. And if it is not a sound argument, why should we continue to replace our Lord's required element with an element that he has not commanded?"

ignorant of fermentation. They could not have known that the fermentation of grape juice is caused by organisms invisible to the naked eye. They could not have known how to prevent the growth of such microscopic organisms, or how to stop them from producing alcohol. Pasteurization, before the birth of Louis Pasteur, is most improbable! Likewise, refrigeration is relatively new, and is still almost unknown in some parts of the world. Pliny, et al, could not have been familiar with modern technology, and the modern conveniences it makes possible. And even if we forget all this, we should limit our remarks to the world of the Bible, and so we have no interest in Pliny. Let us leave Pliny and his crew where we found them. The Bible, not Pliny, is the only rule of our faith and practice. Unlike the Passover meal, Pliny is neither part of the text, nor is he part of the context, of the Bible. Once we limit our discussion to the Bible, we must ask ourselves a different set of questions, namely, *Where in the Bible* did anyone prevent the fermentation of grape juice? *Where in the Bible* did anyone even express a desire to prevent fermentation? And, if nobody in the Bible prevented fermentation or wanted to do so, why would we?

OBJECTION 3: “Just as the kind of bread used in the Lord’s Supper is a matter of indifference, so should the kind of liquid used in the cup be a matter of indifference.”

ANSWER: First, arguments from analogy are often weak. We would not approve of the argument that says, “Tobacco is legal, so marijuana should also be legal.” Second, what if we deny the premise of the argument? Some authorities say the bread in the Lord’s Supper should be leavened; others say it should be unleavened. It may well be that the kind of bread we should use is not a matter of indifference. True, it has often been treated as a matter of indifference in the churches, but that is hardly a reason we should continue to do so, either now or in the future. Third, the term used in the biblical instructions about the type of bread used in the Lord’s Supper is simply bread (Greek: *artos*), which is not specific, but the terms used for the contents of the cup are specific; therefore, the two cases are not analogous. The analogy fails. Fourth, experience shows us that the effort to discuss the bread in the Lord’s Supper, while simultaneously discussing the cup, fosters confusion, and is likely to continue to do so; therefore, these matters should be considered separately.

OBJECTION 4: “I took a vow to abstain from all distribution and consumption of alcoholic beverages. Therefore, I cannot administer or partake of the Lord’s Supper, if it uses wine, in good conscience.”

ANSWER: First, some people have suggested that the vow to abstain from alcoholic consumption in general does not prevent the person who takes the vow from administering or partaking of wine in the Lord’s Supper. Such people have suggested that the vow was not intended to apply, and does not apply, to wine in the Lord’s Supper. The RPCNA Synod of 1857 declared “Resolved, 3. That nothing in this preamble and resolutions is to be construed as designed to apply to the use of wine in the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper, or of alcoholic stimulants used for medicinal purposes.” Second, no vow can bind our religious practice or our conscience, if the vow is unbiblical. A vow that results in our refusal to administer or partake of the Lord’s Supper, if according to Christ’s appointment, is unbiblical. As the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXII teaches us, “An oath...cannot oblige to sin.” “No man

may vow to do any thing forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded..." As the example of Jephthah in Judges 11 teaches us, we ought to break whatever vow we have made, if keeping our vow would cause us to sin.

OBJECTION 5: "My conscience does not permit me to drink wine for any purpose, so I cannot partake of the Lord's Supper, if it uses wine."

ANSWER: We must realize that our consciences are not infallible. They can be weak or mistaken. In such cases, we ought to instruct our consciences with the Bible so that they become stronger. A fully informed conscience will receive the cup of the Lord with reverence and rejoicing, not fear. Our Lord Jesus commanded us, "Drink ye all of it," and we must cheerfully obey Him.

OBJECTION 6: "I retain Christian liberty to drink or not drink wine, so I will choose to not partake of the Lord's Supper whenever it uses wine."

ANSWER: Christian liberty is the right of every believer, and it must be defended and maintained at all times and in all places. However, every Christian must submit to the Lord Jesus, to whom all authority has been given, and who is always the Lord of every Christian's conscience. The doctrine of Christian liberty, or liberty of conscience, sets us free "from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship" (Westminster Confession of Faith, XX, ii); however, it does not liberate us from the law of God, including our duty to worship God according to His word, and His word teaches us that the cup contains wine. "The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word...**the administration and receiving of the sacraments...**" (Westminster Larger Catechism 108, Emphasis added). Our Lord Jesus commanded us to "Drink ye all" from the communion cup, and from this command we have never been set free. We have not been liberated from our duty to worship God in spirit and in truth.

OBJECTION 7: "We will avoid offense to everyone, by offering a "split cup" or a "split tray" to all the members of our churches. Some partakers will receive wine, while partakers of a different opinion will receive grape juice."

ANSWER: As we have already demonstrated, the use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper is a sin, because it is contrary to the institution of Christ. Whether used by many or by few, whether used by the whole congregation or only a part, makes no difference. The officers of the church cannot allow such open and notorious sin in the church, lest they bring down wrath on the church and on themselves.

OBJECTION 8: "I fear for the peace of the church, if such a drastic change to the Lord's Supper is adopted."

ANSWER: True, we are taught to "seek peace and pursue it" (I Peter 3:1). We are also instructed to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). On the other hand, we are commanded to "Buy the truth, and do not sell it" (Proverbs 23:23). Furthermore, "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Godly wisdom seeks purity first, then peace. A truly biblical peace can only be based on

biblical truth. Compromise results in a counterfeit peace, like the false prophets who preached “‘peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:4). Peace is important, but truth is even more important.

OBJECTION 9: “I fear that the use of wine in the Lord’s Supper may increase drunkenness in our churches, and this should be avoided at all costs.”

ANSWER: We must agree that drunkenness is a sin, and a moral evil. However, sin is not caused by any material object, neither is it caused by the sacrament; rather, it is to be found in the hearts of fallen men. As Jesus taught us, it is “not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man...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...” (Matthew 15). For this reason, the solution to the problem of sin has always been, and always will be, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. No commandment of men, however well-intentioned, can solve the problem of sin. “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 2:23).

OBJECTION 10: “I am afraid that even the small amount of wine in the Lord’s Supper will cause me to become a drunkard.”

ANSWER: The sin of drunkenness cannot be caused by the small amounts of wine in the Lord’s Supper, any more than gluttony can be caused by the bread. Drunkenness is the work of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:20-21), not the sacrament, for the sacrament is a holy gift from God. We ought not to blame the biblical administration of the holy sacrament for what are our own failures. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:13-15).

OBJECTION 11: “The use of wine in the Lord’s Supper will present many pastoral problems. Because we have used grape juice in the Lord’s Supper for many years, tender Christians will not understand such a dramatic change as this. Such problems are beyond the ability of the leaders of our church.”

ANSWER: Regrettably, the use of real wine in the Lord’s Supper may be the occasion of many problems. However, we should remember the important distinction between a *cause* and an *occasion*. The Lord’s Supper, when administered according to Christ’s appointment, can never be the cause for sin. However, many people may find it to be the occasion for sin. To illustrate: the preaching of the doctrines of grace can be an occasion for much opposition and resistance, but the opposition and resistance are caused by the sinful heart of man, not by the doctrines of grace. Sometimes, offense is taken, even when no offense is given. And so it is in the Lord’s Supper. The giving and the receiving of the cup of the Lord gives no one a cause, or a reason, to sin. It must be admitted that many beloved people of God do not understand the teaching of God’s word on the subject of wine in general, nor wine in the Lord’s Supper. Some will act or speak out of such weaknesses. Yet, the solution is not to abandon biblical principles,

but rather to return to those principles, with pastoral sensitivity, prayers for reform, and the faithful preaching of God’s word. Under no circumstances should the weaknesses of mere men become the rule of our faith or practice, for Christ is the only King of the Church, and the Bible is our only guide. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to God and to trust in Him for all things, including the results of whatever follows our efforts to reform His sacrament.

OBJECTION 12: “I am not willing to consider the contents of the communion cup. I am content to let the Synod (or the elders) decide this matter.”

ANSWER: First, we should remember that even the Synod (or the elders) are not infallible. They can err. As the Westminster Confession of Faith reminds us, “All synods or councils, since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.” Second, the Bible teaches us to “test the spirits” (I John 4:1) and to “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21). Like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, we should examine the Holy Scriptures, in order to determine if what we are told is the truth of God. These are not duties which can be delegated to others; they are ours. Third, it is especially important that we examine all of our worship practices in the light of God’s word, because “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23) and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Unless all of our worship practices are rooted in the word of God, we cannot have the faith that we need to offer them to God with a clear conscience; that is sin.

OBJECTION 13: “I live in an Islamic country that has outlawed the use of wine, and so I cannot use wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.”

ANSWER: No government has the right to outlaw the use of wine in the Lord’s Supper. We must obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19, Daniel 6:10). In God’s providence, wine is easy to make and use, even if this must be done in secret.

OBJECTION 14: “Children under 18 years old sometimes partake of the communion cup, but federal and state law prohibit the distribution of wine to minors.”

ANSWER: The First Amendment to the United States Constitution permits the free exercise of our religion, and so wine in the sacrament is an exception to the general prohibition.

CONCLUSIONS

After a careful—but not exhaustive—examination of the evidence, we must conclude the following.

1. The Holy Scriptures, our only infallible rule of faith and practice, must regulate the public worship of God in all its parts. This would include the giving and the receiving of

the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Neither the traditions of men nor the consciences of Christians can be our rule.

2. The Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, and we ought to observe it as He appointed it. We are not free to alter or change it in any way. No power on earth has the right to take from it, or add to it. Every unbiblical innovation must be rejected.

3. When the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, He called the contents of the communion cup, "the fruit of the vine" or "this fruit of the vine." Since these words were spoken in the context of a Passover meal, the language and traditions surrounding the Passover meal must be examined to determine the meaning of these terms. At the time of Jesus, the Jews used wine in the Passover meal, and used "the fruit of the vine" to mean wine.

4. The Apostle Paul, declaring he was passing on to others what he had received from the Lord Jesus, used the term "cup" and "the cup of blessing, which we bless" to describe the communion cup. However, these terms also have their roots in the Passover meal; when we examine these words in their original context, we discover they simply mean wine.

5. Since the Corinthians became drunk, we know that they used wine, not grape juice. However, while Paul criticizes the Corinthians for drinking wine to excess, he does not criticize them for using wine in the Lord's Supper.

6. At the time of Jesus and His disciples, the modern technology needed to preserve grape juice in an unfermented state (e.g. pasteurization) did not exist. Since the grape harvest in first century Palestine occurred in the fall, and the Last Supper occurred in the spring, the disciples, while preparing the meal, could not have procured unfermented grape juice. Jesus did not reference something that could not and did not exist, when He said, "prepare the Passover" and "this fruit of the vine." "This fruit of the vine" was a reference to what was a common object in the culture and religion of His time. Jesus and His disciples used wine, the fermented juice of grapes, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.

7. Drinking wine in moderation is not a sin, so we must not object to wine in the Lord's Supper on the ground that it is a sin.

8. Since Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper using wine, wine must be used in the Lord's Supper. [NOTE: This conclusion does **not** agree with the current position of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, which permits either wine or grape juice to be used in the Lord's Supper. See the Minutes of Synod for 2002 (pages 139-142), 2010 (pages 13-18), and 2017 (pages 33-41).]

9. The practice of using unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper is unbiblical, and a sin. [NOTE: This conclusion does **not** agree with the current position of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, which permits either wine or

grape juice to be used in the Lord's Supper. See the Minutes of Synod for 2002 (pages 139-142), 2010 (pages 13-18), and 2017 (pages 33-41).]

10. Since the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:16), since ministers are to preach "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), and since the duties required in the Ninth Commandment include "preserving and promoting the truth between man and man" and "appearing and standing for the truth" (Westminster Larger Catechism 144), the truth that wine must be used in the Lord's Supper ought not to be suppressed. Instead, this truth should be forthrightly taught, proclaimed and believed, as the Lord of the church gives opportunity, by every Synod, Presbytery, Session, elder, and individual Christian.

PROPOSALS

The author of this paper hereby proposes the following:

1. That the Synod receive this position paper.
2. That the Synod adopt this position paper and all its parts.
3. That the Synod exhort and encourage all elders to read and study this paper.
4. That the Synod exhort and encourage all of the churches within its jurisdiction to use wine, the fermented juice of grapes, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
5. That the Synod denounce the use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper as an unbiblical and unconstitutional practice.

Appendix A

The Westminster Standards and their Scripture Proofs

Many people have observed that the Bible does not use the word “wine” when describing the content of the communion cup. Jesus referred to the content of the cup as “the fruit of the vine” or “this fruit of the vine,” not “wine.” Likewise, I Corinthians 11 uses the term “this cup,” not “wine.”

Therefore, some say, we cannot know that God intended for us to use wine, and not unfermented grape juice, in the Lord’s Supper.

However, we should carefully study the relevant scripture proofs in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism. (We should emphasize the fact that the scripture proofs, like the propositions in the body of the documents they support, are also part of the Constitution of the RPCNA, and so repay careful study.) If we do, we find that these documents repeatedly identify “the fruit of the vine” and “this fruit of the vine” with wine. In other words, the terms “this fruit of the vine” and “wine” are synonyms.

The scripture proofs in these same documents also identify “this cup” with wine. “This cup” and “wine” are synonyms.

One example will illustrate this, though it would be easy to adduce others. The last clause in Westminster Confession of Faith 29, 5 says, “. . .in substance and nature, they [i.e., the elements in the Lord’s Supper] still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.” The Westminster Confession teaches us that the second element in the sacrament must be wine. The content of the communion cup is common wine before it is used in the sacrament, and it continues to be common wine during and after the sacrament. But where is the proof for this assertion? We need not search very far. The Westminster divines were kind enough to provide us with scripture proofs for their claims, and we are referred by footnote or endnote in this place to I Corinthians 11:26-28 and Matthew 26:29.

I Corinthians 11:26-28 says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink *this cup*, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this cup* of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” Moreover, Matthew 26:29, says, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of *this fruit of the vine*, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

According to Westminster Confession of Faith 29, 5, the content of the communion cup must be wine. Why? We learn the answer to this important question when we examine the scripture proofs. The cup must contain wine, because the Holy Scriptures teach that Jesus instituted the sacrament with “this fruit of the vine,” and because I Corinthians 11:26-28 says “this cup” was used in the apostolic church. To put the matter differently, since the Holy Scriptures say the second element is “this fruit of the vine” and “this cup,”

we confess that wine must be used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We cannot sever the indissoluble link between the Holy Scripture's use of the terms "this fruit of the vine" and "this cup" from the Westminster Confession's teaching that wine must be used in the sacrament. Otherwise, we suggest that the Westminster divines had no scriptural authority for their contention that wine must be used; they would have been appalled at such a suggestion.

For the Westminster Assembly, "this fruit of the vine" is wine. "This cup" is wine. Of course, as always, we should imitate the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11) and "test the spirits" (I John 4:1). We must carefully examine the claims of the Westminster Assembly. Was the Westminster Assembly right to identify "this fruit of the vine" with wine? Were they right to identify "this cup" in I Corinthians 11:26-28 with wine? We ought to test these claims.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the Westminster Assembly believed and taught that the biblical term "this fruit of the vine" referred to wine. Likewise, there can be no doubt that they believed and taught that "this cup" in I Corinthians 11 referred to wine.

This is the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism. And since these documents— together with their scripture proofs—are a part of our standards, our standards do not take a vague or ambiguous position regarding the term "this fruit of the vine" or "this cup." According to our standards, these biblical terms are not generic. Instead, our standards teach us that "this fruit of the vine" is wine, and that "this cup" is wine. Our standards not only teach us that wine should be used in the Lord's Supper, but they also teach us *why*. Wine should be used, because "the fruit of the vine" is wine and because "this cup" is wine.

Whatever diffidence or discomfort some of us may feel whenever we try to interpret "this fruit of the vine" or "this cup," our standards are clear. "This fruit of the vine" is wine. "This cup" is wine.

This is the truth we confess in our standards.

Appendix B

Should the Wine in the Lord's Supper be Diluted with Water?

What follows is not intended to be a complete answer to this question, but perhaps these points are relevant.

1. The Bible does not tell us that Jesus or His disciples diluted the wine with water. Nor does the Bible say that we should do so. We may infer that Jesus or His disciples did so, but that's an inference, and not a necessary inference.
2. Even if we are convinced that Jesus added water to the wine, we cannot be sure that His act of adding water was an example He wanted His church to follow. In other words, adding water may have been something Jesus did, but it's not part of the actual institution of the Lord's Supper. An analogy some have used elsewhere was the fact that the first Lord's Supper took place in an upper room; but we don't think that the upper room is a part of the original institution. And so it is with adding water to the wine. Jesus may have done it, but does that mean we should do it? Since the Holy Scriptures are the rule of faith and practice, the silence of the Bible concerning the addition of water is important to note. Jesus said, "This fruit of the vine," but He did not say, "Dilute this fruit of the vine with water." Arguments from silence are often very weak, but here such an argument may be valid.
3. As we consider the question of diluting the wine with water, we are greatly intrigued with the following quote from elsewhere in this paper. "It was taken for granted that the wine should be diluted with water. The strong Italic wine was mixed with three parts of water; so a cup containing one-sixteenth of a log of pure wine had to be large enough to contain three-sixteenths of a log of water and allow a space of one-sixteenth of a log free at the brim for drinking. For the weaker Palestinian Saron wine, mixed only with twice its quantity of water, smaller cups would suffice. According to Eliezer, the mixing was to be done before the benediction over the wine. At the Passover meal this was not performed at one time in a great vessel for the purpose, but at each cup, in order that every cup should be an entity in itself." (Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, pages 148-150. The underlining is added for emphasis.)
4. If we analyze the quote in the preceding paragraph—especially the underlined—we conclude that, yes, the Jews diluted their Passover wine with water, but the exact ratio of water to wine was changed *according to the circumstances*. When they used strong wine, the amount of water used was one thing; when they used weak wine, the amount of water used was very different. If we understand the reasons for this difference correctly, it seems that the Jews did not want to become drunk (after all, their Scriptures and ours forbid that), so they watered the wine to prevent that from happening. (It helps to remember here that they used four large cups of wine in their Passover meal, so some dilution was probably needed to prevent drunkenness. At least, the Jews thought so.) In other

words, the water varied with the circumstances. What we are cautiously suggesting here is that the Jews regarded the wine as the really essential thing, and the water as a mere *circumstance*.

5. If the Jews regarded the wine as the really essential thing, and the water as a circumstance, it seems reasonable to think Jesus and His disciples would have regarded the wine and the water the same way.
6. If Jesus and His disciples regarded the wine as the really essential thing, and the water as a circumstance, we should regard them the same way. The water, strictly speaking, is not an element in the sacrament, and is not required.
7. If we insist that water is required by the appointment of Christ, it is difficult to see how we can avoid the charge that we assert three elements in the sacrament, instead of just two—and that would be contrary to the church's position. The protestant churches disagree on almost everything, but not this. The churches could be wrong, and we could be right, but we should be more than a little reluctant to think so!
8. The reason the Jews diluted wine—to prevent drunkenness after drinking four large cups of wine—does not pertain to us. There's no danger of drunkenness if we drink one small cup of modern wine. (Although the Westminster Directory said we should use "large cups.")
9. Of course, we cannot dilute the wine to the point that it ceases to be wine. If we do, we go beyond scriptural warrant. The content of the cup must still be wine, and not anything else. (In this connection, it is interesting to note the parallel between the "wine" and the "mixed wine" in Proverbs 23:30—both have the same effect. "Mixed wine" is still wine, biblically speaking.)
10. We see the divine wisdom at work here. Imagine a situation in which some of the water has evaporated from the wine, and now the wine is both very strong, and also very thick and syrupy. Imagine also that there is not enough for everyone to partake, either because someone did not bring enough, or because so much has evaporated, or some combination of both of these things. Would it not be wise to add water? We grant that we who live in America in 2019 are unlikely to find ourselves in such dire straits, but the Lord has wisely provided for His church, and intends that it spread throughout all the world, and throughout history. She will find herself in all sorts of circumstances and situations. In every situation in which she finds herself, the church must "do this" in remembrance of Jesus, until He comes again.
11. Our thoughts on the preceding paragraph notwithstanding, it's important that the wine be diluted with water only for sufficient reasons. If someone wants to add water because they are trying to please someone who thinks wine is evil, that would not be a sufficient reason to do it! In other words, we should not dilute the

wine for “religious” reasons, only for practical ones.

12. The clinching argument on this subject may be the fact that the Corinthians became drunk. It’s hard to see how that could have happened with heavily diluted wine.
13. Finally, it is perhaps not out of place to observe that the Lord Himself added water to the wine when He was making it in its state of nature. Grape juice, and therefore wine, is mostly water. Exactly how much is water, we need not to profess to know.

Appendix C Moses Stuart

[Moses Stuart was perhaps the most important theologian in the early temperance movements. He graduated from Yale in 1799, became the pastor of Centre Congregational Church in New Haven in 1806, and was appointed professor of sacred literature at Andover Theological Seminary in 1809. In addition to his other works, Stuart published a pamphlet in 1848 and a book in 1849 in which he proposed and promoted the new "two wine" theory. The following is a heavily edited version of his essay entitled, "What is the duty of the churches, in regard to the use of fermented (alcoholic) wine, in celebrating the Lord's Supper?" It appeared in several publications, including *The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* of 1835. Though an ardent proponent of temperance, and warning against the "habitual" use of all alcoholic beverages, even wine, Stuart concedes that "the Savior employed it in the institution of the sacramental supper." His essay provides the reader with a picture of the progress the temperance movements were making in his time, as well as their effect on the administration of the Lord's Supper. Scholar Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait calls Stuart's essay the "first article ever questioning the use of alcohol in the Eucharist."]

What is the duty of the churches, in regard to the use of fermented (alcoholic) wine, in celebrating the Lord's Supper?

A satisfactory answer to this question is necessarily connected with the present state of the temperance question in general. What positions in respect to this may be regarded as well established, and what still remain in a greater or less degree doubtful, are inquiries that of course precede the discussion of the subject immediately before us.

A brief answer to these inquiries is all that can be expected on this occasion; and in reality such an answer is all that is desirable. So widely diffused at present are the excellent publications in different parts of our country, on the subject of temperance, that there is no reader in any of the walks of life, who may not have access to a knowledge of its leading principles, and few indeed to whom they are not in some degree known. The points that are universally admitted by reasonable and considerate men, of whatever denomination or party, may be summarily stated as follows:— 1. All intoxication is forbidden by the Scriptures, and by the laws of our physical nature. Those who do not admit the authority of the Bible will concede that intoxication is injurious to health, usefulness, estate, morals, and reputation. It follows, 2. That all such use of intoxicating liquors of any kind, as will produce drunkenness, or injure health or usefulness, is unlawful. Argument on these subjects is no longer necessary for the mass of our community, and surely it is not needed for Christians. Among these, moreover, and among all sober and judicious men in our community, with few exceptions, the following positions may be regarded as fully and finally established; viz., That the habitual and common use of ardent spirits, or distilled intoxicating liquors in any form, or the manufacturing and vending of them for common use as a drink, IS AN IMMORALITY.

Among no class of citizens is the opinion that drinking ardent spirits is injurious more widely diffused or more firmly held, than among physicians. To their distinguished honor be it said, that contrary to their pecuniary and worldly interests, they have come forward, and already more than two thousand of them have testified that in no case does drinking of ardent spirits promote health; that it increases exposure to disease, and renders the management of this, when existing, much more difficult, and the issue more dangerous.

This testimony being allowed, (and who is competent to contradict it?) it follows, that the use of ardent spirit as a common drink is a sin against our physical nature. The unbeliever therefore, who professes to be only the disciple of natural religion, as well as he who admits the authority of revelation, must confess that the general and particular temperance conventions of our land, assembled for the sake of discussing questions pertaining to the subject of temperance, have rightly decided that the using or vending of ardent spirit as a common drink IS AN IMMORALITY.

Such then are the general positions at present, in regard to the subject of temperance, positions which may now be taken as a basis for future argument and action. Accordingly I shall so consider them, in the remainder of this Essay; and consequently I may leave them without farther remark.

But there is one interesting part of this great subject which yet remains in some degree unsettled in the minds of many sober and excellent men. A great part of the temperance conventions and societies have as yet, in their discussions and decisions, left the question respecting the use of wines untouched. It is well that they have done so; for it is always best in such great matters as this respecting temperance, first to produce, if possible, union of sentiment and action on points that are of a plainer and more fundamental nature. This being done, and the general subject being better understood by a course of discussion and experiments, points that seemed to be difficult or doubtful at first may finally have such light cast upon them as that a general union of sentiment may be produced respecting them. Some of the general conventions, however, on the subject of temperance, and many local societies and Churches, have already considered the question as it respects wines and every species of intoxicating liquors, and have decided the broad and general principle, that duty requires abstinence from all intoxicating liquors of every kind and name.

The simple basis of their reasoning may be stated in a few words. The Scriptures forbid all intoxication, in any degree. The laws of our physical and mental nature equally forbid it; because both body and mind are injured by it. No species of liquor which intoxicates can be used habitually, without great danger of forming an excessive attachment to it; for so the universal voice of experience decides.—No person, therefore, can indulge himself in the habitual or frequent use of any liquor which has an inebriating quality, without at the same time incurring the danger of forming a habit which will prove injurious to him, and which may be fatal. Now it cannot be innocent nor consistent for those who are taught to pray, *Lead me not into temptation*, thus voluntarily rush into it. It is a settled point—one now past all dispute—that water is the best and safest of all

drinks. No other liquor therefore can be necessary: some medicinal cases only excepted, which need not be and are not here brought into the account.

It follows then, since water is the best of all drinks, and since no intoxicating liquor can be taken either habitually or frequently without danger, that it is contrary to the true spirit of Christianity and to the laws of our physical and intellectual nature, to indulge in the frequent or habitual use of wine, or of any other liquor which can inebriate. Thus do the Churches and societies argue, who have proscribed the common use of wine. Most of them advance indeed still farther.—

They are willing to make the supposition that wine does no harm as a common drink, in order to present the most favorable side of the argument to those who differ from them in opinion. Allowing now for the sake of argument that it does no harm, they have still another and an important question to ask, viz., Does it do any good? Physically or mentally, (a few cases of bodily indisposition excepted, where stimulant is temporarily required,) habitual or often repeated stimulus does no good, except merely to gratify the taste. All well educated and sober physicians are now agreed that habitual or frequent stimulus of any kind must not only do no good, but inevitably do harm in the end. The reason is very plain. He who takes stimulus in health can derive little or no benefit from it in sickness. The gratification of taste then seems to be the only good that is to be accomplished by the common or frequent use of wines. But is this of so high and noble a nature that it should be sought after and indulged in by a Christian at the expense and hazard which must of necessity attend it? And beside, it is quite certain that the drinkers of pure water acquire a higher relish for that element, and have more enjoyment in partaking of it than ever falls to the lot of those who habitually indulge in the drinking of wine. Those who have made a fair experiment of both may be confidently appealed to for a decision on this question. To the inquiry then, 'Does the drinking of wine often or habitually do any good?', the persons in question suppose we may answer without any hesitation, that it accomplishes no important good; that it sacrifices a greater good, even on the score of taste only; and that the danger with which it is always attended makes it at the very best a practice of great hazard.

The writer of this, who for a long time after the efforts to bring about the temperance reformation had commenced, did not think it expedient to bring forward the discussion respecting wines, is persuaded that the time- has now come, in which the question should be fully and fairly discussed. After often and deliberately examining the subject proffered by the question, what is the fundamental inquiry for every true friend of temperance to make, in order to satisfy himself as to the course which duty now bids him to take; he cannot perceive that this inquiry can amount to more or less than what is contained in the question : Is intoxication itself, or only the method in which intoxication is produced, the main subject of our concern ? How can the sober inquirer after simple truth and duty hesitate as to the answer which should be given to this last question?

I admit that some of these liquors are more costly than others, and some of them more immediately and highly deleterious than others. Drunkards upon ale prepare for a speedy ossification of the heart, and must expect a sudden death. Newly distilled

whiskey and other liquors of the like nature are more inflammatory than spirits which are matured by age. Immoderate wine drinkers may live perhaps longer than the immoderate drinkers of liquors highly alcoholic. But their estate is sooner wasted. Wretchedness and poverty of course sooner come upon their families. The example which they set, moreover, may in appearance have less of what is odious and horrible in it; but for that very reason it is likely to do the more mischief to others. Intoxication, and all approach toward it, in all its stages, from whatever liquor it proceeds, is deleterious to body, mind, and outward estate. There may be some differences and some gradations in the mischief done by inebriating liquors; but in a mere question of duty and conscience they can scarcely be worth regarding. In cases of a moral nature, of religious duty, the question is not simply, in most cases not at all, whether a thing is more or less evil, but whether it is evil, and therefore to be avoided.

Nothing can be more certain, than that intoxication, in all its gradations from the lowest to the highest, is evil moral and natural. Can it be lawful then for me to incur this evil by the use of any liquor whatever, so as in any degree to intoxicate myself? Plainly it cannot.

Now if wine be an intoxicating liquor, (as all must know, who know any thing of its nature, or who are aware that most of our fashionable and common wines are nearly one half as strong as brandy,) then why is it not as wrong for me to use wine so as to produce any degree of intoxication, as it is to produce the same effect by any other liquor? Is it possible to make any difference here as to the principle which is concerned, that will amount to any thing worthy of serious notice in a moral point of view?

The true and fundamental principle then, of all Churches, and of all the real friends of temperance, would seem to be, that the frequent or habitual use of all liquors which can produce intoxication is to be avoided. All that comes short of this fails of reaching the essential point to be aimed at. Surely it will be conceded that the grand object of all temperance measures must be to put a stop to intemperance, and not merely to discuss the niceties of difference between one intoxicating liquor and another. Can any thing effectually do this, but to refrain from the frequent, the habitual, or excessive use of all liquors, whatever may be their specific name or nature, which contain sufficient alcohol to produce intoxication, when drank in any quantity that we can well suppose men capable of drinking?

Stimulating the system habitually with alcohol, whether in wine or any other drink, cannot possibly, if we credit the best physicians, be otherwise than injurious to the health of body and mind. It is therefore an offence against the laws of our nature; and consequently against the will of that God who ordained them.... Habitual drinking of wine, then, may be less deleterious and in some respects less criminal than the habitual drinking of ardent spirit; but does it therefore follow that stimulating with wine in such a manner is not really evil in the sight of God?

It is time then for all our Churches and all the friends of temperance, to look for the future at things, and not to be influenced in their measures by *names*. The public now

know, or may know, on the subject of alcohol, what a short time ago they did not fully and satisfactorily know; and what a few years since they did not know at all. Our measures, therefore, ought to keep pace with our light. *Fermented alcoholic* liquors should henceforth become the proper subjects of avoidance and prohibition, and not merely *distilled* ones. The enemy should be opposed and routed, whether in the open field or in ambush.

But here we shall of course be met with the allegation that has often been repeated: 'The Bible—the Holy Scriptures—allow, yea enjoin the use of wine. In a multitude of places they speak of it as in use among pious and excellent men of ancient days ; and the Giver of every good and perfect gift Himself required that it should be made a part of every daily oblation in the temple ; and the Lord of glory Himself has made it one of the elements of that holy supper, by which His sufferings and death are commemorated among all His faithful disciples.'

The truth of the facts now stated I do most fully and readily acknowledge. Whoever will open his Bible at Exod. xxix, 40, and Num. xxviii,7, will see that wine or strong drink was part of the daily offering to God, which was to be made by the priests. By consulting Mark xiv, 35, moreover, he will perceive that the cup which Jesus gave to His disciples, when He instituted the sacrament, contained the fruit of the vine, i. e. wine. That wine was drunk on sacramental occasions by the disciples of Christ at a subsequent period is quite clear also from 1 Cor. xi, 21, where the apostle sharply reproves some of the Corinthian Christians, because they intoxicated themselves at the holy supper.

On one other occasion the Hebrews were permitted to use wine and strong drink. In Deut. xiv, 22-26, they are commanded to tithe all their increase or productions, and to eat of this tithe before the Lord, in the place where He shall appoint. But if the place where they live is so distant that they cannot conveniently carry up the tithe itself with them, when they go to present themselves before the Lord, they are directed to sell it, to carry the money with them, and to purchase ' oxen or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatsoever their soul desireth,' and to eat and rejoice before the Lord.

The nature of this permission amounts to the same thing as a permission in our country, in those states where public thanksgiving is kept, to drink wine and such strong drink as the Hebrews used upon that day.

There are two cases more which merit our attention. Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (John ii, 2-11) turned water into wine, for the accommodation of the guests who were present; and Paul directs Timothy to drink a little wine, on account of his frequent infirmities, 1 Tim. v, 23.

These are, I apprehend, all the decided cases of approbation or sanction to the drinking of wine, which the Bible exhibits. The case in which Wisdom invites her guests to a feast, (Prov. ix, 2-5,) and the injunction to give wine or strong drink to him who is ready to perish or is of a heavy heart, (Prov. xxxi, 6 ;) the case in which it is said that the Lord will make for His people a feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees well refined, (Isa.

xxv. 6,) all range themselves under the same principles as the ones already specified. On special occasions of feasting, such as weddings, thanksgivings, and the like, there can be no doubt that the Jews were accustomed to drink wine, nor any doubt that they were permitted to do so; for the Scriptures do not speak of the temperate use of wine, on such occasions, with disapprobation.—

But let it be noted, that they no where command it, except in cases where the restoration of lost health is concerned. Wine or strong drink (such as the Hebrews used) must be given to those who are of a heavy heart or ready to perish, i. e. to those who are sunk down and dispirited by disease; and Timothy is required by the apostle to take wine on account of his frequent infirmities; while the use of it at feasts is mentioned merely as a circumstance which was usually connected with them, and a thing which was not forbidden. On this ground, we find that Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of being a glutton and a wine-bibber, because He accepted of invitations to attend such meals or feasts as were prepared in special honor of Him. It would seem to be a natural conclusion, that wine was exhibited at those feasts; although there is no proof whatever that the Savior habitually drank it when He attended them.

The amount of the whole Scriptural representation seems to be, that while the use of wine or strong drink was enjoined in oblations to God, and while on the day of Jewish thanksgiving the Hebrews were permitted to drink it—while the Savior employed it in the institution of the sacramental supper, and sanctioned the use of it at a wedding feast, and possibly at other feasts, and Timothy was enjoined to use it for a medicinal purpose, yet, for the most part, the Bible is filled with warnings against it, and all excessive use of it is plainly prohibited under the highest penalty.

The lawfulness of occasionally using such wine or strong drink as they had in Palestine, is then established, as we must concede, on a basis which cannot be shaken so long as the authority of Scripture and the example of Jesus remain. Among intelligent and enlightened Christians there never can be any controversy on this part of the subject, so far as the simple fact is concerned. It is only the modifications and limitations which we are now called to examine.

We are approaching near to the final issues of our inquiries, 'Is it the duty of the Churches to make use of fermented (alcoholic) wine a in celebrating the Lord's Supper?' One thing we may truly say, in answering this question, which is, that Christ and His disciples have left no direction or command to make use of strong alcoholic wines.—

As to their example, it certainly cannot go to show the propriety or lawfulness of using artificial and *brandied* wines at the Lord's table; which most Churches are known at present to do. In respect to pure wine, moreover, if it can be had, there is not even a distant probability, as we have already seen, that it was drunk at the table by Jesus and His disciples, without being reduced by water. Why should we depart now from their example? If we must use *wine* at the sacramental table, then let us imitate, as nearly as possible, the original use of it; and this, as we have seen, could not have been wine

drunk without any reduction by water; at least no probability of this kind can be made out.

The question has been asked, 'Is it *necessary* to employ wine at all to at the table of the Lord?' To which I would answer, It is not necessary;* for wine was chosen as the representative of one of the natural aliments of the body, viz. drink ; by which is symbolized the necessity of our souls' being nourished by faith in the blood of Jesus. It is a natural emblem, even from its color, of that blood. Necessary, however, to symbolic use, it plainly is not. The Lord's Supper might be celebrated without it, in like manner as we dispense with celebrating it in an upper chamber—with lying down—with unleavened bread—and with other things of the like nature. But still I do not think, with some of my Christian brethren, that it is expedient to dispense with wine at the table of the Lord. The custom of using it may be so managed, that no reproach, no difficulty, no danger will come to the Church or to religion in consequence of it.

*The editors of *The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* here added the following in a footnote. "We are inclined to dissent from the professor at this point, as, if it had not been the most proper element for the purpose of commemorating the death of the Savior, He certainly would not have selected It, as water or any other liquid was at hand, and therefore might have been used by our Lord on this solemn occasion, had He considered it equally suitable. We think we might dispense with water in baptism with as much propriety as we could wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But with this exception, the above Essay has our most hearty approbation, and we therefore earnestly commend it to the serious consideration of our readers.—Ed."

Appendix D William Sprague

[William B. Sprague (1795-1876) preached the following sermon, entitled, "The Danger of Being Over Wise" from the pulpit of Second Presbyterian Church in Albany on June 7, 1835, after which it was published. His text is Ecclesiastes 7:16. His sermon is of interest for at least four reasons. First, Sprague repeatedly calls the exclusion of real wine from the Lord's Supper an "innovation" and even an "unhallowed innovation." Second, Sprague tells us that he was very sympathetic to the temperance movement, so his judgement is unclouded by any bias against it. Third, Sprague's words are evidence that the influence of the temperance movement is the reason that wine was being excluded from the Lord's Supper in his day. Fourth, Sprague helps us to see that the use of grape juice is rooted in the sinful tendency to be "overwise;" instead of simply accepting the institution of Jesus with a child-like faith, men have tried to change the sacrament to suit their own conceits. The complete sermon was reprinted by Naphtali Press in 1997. The reprint by Naphtali Press contains important additional material, including Sprague's answer to the essay by Moses Stuart that is on a previous page of this book. What follows below has been heavily edited for the sake of brevity.]

Neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

There is no quality which is more frequently commended in the sacred scriptures than wisdom. It is represented as emphatically the wealth of the immortal mind; the fountain of peace and joy; the seed of whatever can dignify the character, or elevate the destiny of man. He who has this treasure in the scriptural sense of the word has life; has all needful good in the life that now is, all conceivable good in the life that is to come.

But if this be so, you will ask, perhaps, whether the language of my text, and the general tenor of scripture, are quite consistent with each other; or rather whether they do not involve an absolute contradiction. I answer, they are entirely consistent; for it is genuine wisdom which the scripture everywhere enjoins; it is the affectation of wisdom which the wise man in our text so pointedly condemns...Be not wise above that which is written. Be not so wise as to attempt to make things plain which God in *his* wisdom has seen best left obscure; or to make things appear absurd which God has been pleased to reveal as matters of faith; or to abate a single particle from the strictness of God's truth, or to mar in the least degree the purity of his institutions. "For why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" Why, by setting up your wisdom against the wisdom of the Highest, by walking in the rush light of your own reason, rather than in the sun light of his testimonies — why should you bring upon yourself evil, the depth of which you have no line to fathom?

The text will naturally lead me to mention some *instances* in which men make themselves over-wise, and as I pass along, to *rebuke* the indulgence of this wayward spirit.

Men make themselves over-wise in their manner of treating God's *truth*, and God's *institutions*.

Let me illustrate this branch of my subject by one or two particulars....

Another way in which men make themselves over-wise on this subject is by *modifying the ordinance* to suit their own views; especially by inculcating the doctrine, or adopting the practice, of dispensing with the appropriate elements, or of substituting something in place of them, which the scripture does not warrant; or to come fully to the point which I now have more particularly in view, and on which the movements of the present day will not allow me any longer to be silent — THE EXCLUSION OF WINE FROM THE LORD'S SUPPER....

In the first place, there are several churches in different parts of the country, which, if I am correctly informed, have actually adopted the measure, and are of course strongly committed to its defense and extension. In the next place, there are in many of our churches, individuals who suffer the cup to pass them in the communion service, on the ground that they believe the use of wine, even on that occasion, to be sinful. And then there are periodicals extensively circulated, lending their influence, in a greater or less degree, to this unhallowed innovation....

Another professor ... has written an essay for publication, in which he endeavors to show that neither bread nor wine is essential to the acceptable observance of the Lord's Supper; and that the Temperance cause cannot advance much farther until the use of wine is abolished from this ordinance.

Men who, a year ago, felt nothing but shuddering when it was introduced, have come now to speak of it with timid caution, as if they were speaking on an unsettled question, upon which it were wise not fully to commit themselves; while some of them actually half adopt the principle, and others show that scarcely any of their former scruples now remain. And wherefore is this change? It is because the subject has gradually become familiar to them; and while the current in favor of this innovation has been imperceptibly becoming stronger, no effort has been made to resist it; and even ministers of the gospel have been silent, because they have apprehended no serious danger, or possibly because they have feared to sound the alarm, lest it should subject them to the charge of being hostile to one of the best of causes; and hence these individuals, by a process which they themselves can hardly analyze, and for reasons of which they can give little account, have been brought to their present posture of indecision at least, if not of actually favoring the views which, not long ago, they regarded with horror.

And here you have my reason for bringing this subject before you today. It is not that I believe that any of you are prepared to banish wine from the communion. I am not conscious that there is an individual before me, who would not be disposed to resist such a measure. But then I know that the whole history of the Church shows that such innovations come in by little and little. And though you may now be right — fully right on this subject, yet it supposes nothing worse of you than that you partake of human

nature, to take for granted the possibility of your becoming wrong. And it is with a view to prevent evil that I give you this timely warning.

Be not deceived by the parade of Oriental learning on this subject. Remember that no authority is worth a rush, that contradicts the plain declarations of Christ and his apostles, as they are found in the New Testament. And I ask how the blessed Founder of our religion — a religion designed for common people who can only judge the meaning of scripture, by the principles of common sense — I ask how it was possible that he should have instituted this ordinance to be observed in the Church forever, and spoken of the fruit of the vine, and nothing else, as one of the elements, if, after all, he meant wine and water, or tamarind water, or molasses and water, or anything else than that which his words properly and exclusively indicate. I say, brethren, you have no occasion for Hebrew learning, or Arabic learning, than plain English, to settle this question. The Master himself has settled it; has settled it for the obscurest peasant as truly as for the most eminent biblical critic. And no man, no body of men, has a right to call in question the Master's decision. I have heard the practice of the Church in the second century appealed to in justification of this usage. But if the authority of the second century is good, surely that of the first is better. And why not go a little farther back, and take advantage of that? And if the testimony of uninspired men on this subject is good, the testimony of those who were inspired is better. Why not then be satisfied with simply opening God's word, and ascertaining what is there written on this subject? Ah, it is because God's word says not a word about any other element to be used as drink in this ordinance, but the fruit of the vine.

Does anyone say what harm, after all, can result from the agitation of this subject in our churches, or even from the substitution of water for wine at the Lord's table? Will it not be the same thing, it may be asked, when the first shock occasioned by the innovation is over; and may not the ordinance be celebrated with greater safety, and equal acceptableness? I answer, if wine is not essential to the celebration of the communion, by the very conditions of the ordinance, I know not what is. I would answer again, the very same spirit which would banish wine from the Lord's table, would banish the other element — would annihilate the ordinance itself; and hence my respected friend, the professor, tells us that neither bread nor wine is essential to the acceptable celebration of the Lord's Supper; and hence another individual with whom I have conversed, more than intimated his willingness to have the ordinance entirely abandoned, rather than it should stand in the way of the cause of Temperance.

There is another reason why I cannot be silent on this subject — it is, that by remaining so, I am a stumbling block in the way of multitudes of my fellow Christians, who are looking to the ministers of Christ for warning when the doctrines or the institutions of religion are in danger. In the course of the last week, a highly intelligent and active Christian in the city of New York, whose name is well known in the walks of public benevolence, said to me — and he said it with a degree of emotion which he struggled in vain to suppress — “Sir, nothing has occurred since I indulged a hope that I was a disciple of Christ, which has operated so powerfully as a temptation to believe that all religion is a miserable delusion, as the fact that grave ministers of the gospel are trying

to remodel, and in effect blot out, that ordinance in which I have been accustomed to celebrate my Redeemer's death; in connection with the equally astounding fact, that no one of you, who are set for the defense of the gospel, has ventured to open his lips in public to arrest the progress of this impious fanaticism."

Yet another reason, my friends, for bringing this subject before you: the infidel is casting upon this movement a look of self-complacent triumph. He is beginning to boast that we are getting rid of Christianity by piece-meal; and the signs of the times indicate to him, that under the wonder working hand of modern theological refinement, both the doctrines and institutions of the gospel will gradually be frittered away, until his creed becomes our creed, and his hope becomes our hope. Is it worthwhile for Christians, by tampering with the ordinances of Christ, to give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

I cannot forbear to say too, that this innovation is a deep stab to the comfort of Christians in the commemoration of their Savior's dying love. When I come to the communion table, and administer or receive the sacramental cup, I wish to think of my Redeemer and his death, and the hopes and blessings which I enjoy through him. I wish not to have my mind distracted by having the question forced upon me, whether I am not committing a sin by taking into my lips a drop of wine; and I hesitate not to say, that they who have taken the lead in this effort, who are urging either from the pulpit, or the press, or even in a more private way, the expediency of banishing wine from the holy Supper, are responsible in a great degree for these painful associations by which our communion is embarrassed and embittered; are responsible for imposing upon many a weak conscience a load which renders the approach to the Lord's table anything else than a cheerful and joyful and profitable occasion.

Brethren, I am sure I need not tell you that, in expressing my views so plainly on this subject, I have taken counsel of anything else rather than my feelings. For most gladly would I have been silent, if I could have reconciled such a course with my convictions of duty as a minister of Jesus Christ. I have witnessed too much of the operations of human nature not to know that he who ventures to oppose extravagance, when it is in any way connected with a good cause, does it at the peril of being set down as an enemy to that cause. I cannot forget that my own experience, since I have been among you, has proved that a man who takes it upon himself to rebuke the spirit of fanaticism in revivals of religion, must be expected to have his name blazoned on the list of the enemies of revivals; and most fully do I expect that the remarks which I have now made, will be appealed to, not by you, but by others, to justify the charge against me of being a foe to the cause of Temperance. I say *not by you*, my friends; but even if it were otherwise, and I knew that every one of you would join in this charge — much as I value your good opinion (and there is nothing that I value more, except the approbation of my conscience and my God) — I should still feel myself constrained to protest without a qualifying or softening word, against this unhallowed invasion of one of God's institutions.

But I am not a foe to the cause of Temperance; with religious indignation I repel the charge. I regard it as having come into existence under the special favor of Heaven. I honor it as a noble part of that moral machinery designed to help forward the world's renovation. I look upon those who have labored in it faithfully and diligently as the benefactors of their race; and I would still bid them God speed in the good enterprise, and invoke the smiles of Heaven on every effort which they put forth in the spirit of charity and of a sound mind. But if the Temperance cause claims a precedence of the institutions of God, then I insist that it claims too much. If it cannot go forward but at the expense of perverting or annihilating an ordinance or our religion, then I insist that it is high time it should come to a solemn pause; and I say unhesitatingly, perish the hand — no matter what hand it be — that would profanely withdraw from the Supper either of the memorials of my Redeemer's death! Let God's institutions stand in their own simple majesty, though the noblest fabric which man ever built should be prostrate in the dust.

Brethren, whatever you may think of the freedom of these remarks now, I verily believe the day will come when every one of you will be satisfied that I have been pleading in behalf of the Temperance cause; for after all that I have said, God's institutions *will* live, and whatever arrays itself against them, will come to naught. I counsel you then, as *friends of Temperance*, to beware how you even seem to sanction this innovation. For, rely on it, God will not smile on any effort that goes to impugn his authority, though it be professedly made for the advancement of his honor; and even if it seems to succeed, it will be found ultimately to have concealed in it the principle of self-destruction. Let the Temperance cause be kept upon its own proper ground, and within its own legitimate limits, and God's blessing will be in it; and the blessing of many ready to perish will come upon it; and new and ardent friends from every side will cluster around it; and its triumphs will not only be gratefully celebrated on earth, but we may reasonably believe will swell the anthems of Heaven. But let it attempt to rise on the ruin of God's institutions, and I forewarn you that the days of its heaviness and mourning are at hand; and it will be well if we do not have occasion to go weeping to the grave where it is entombed, and in the bitterness of our spirits to ask concerning it, "Can these dry bones live?"

Appendix E
The Associate Synod
The Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository, 1835

[The following article appeared in the September 1835 issue of the *Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository*. *The Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository* was a publication by ministers in the Associate Synod; and, according to its subtitle, it was “Devoted to the Principles of the Reformation as Set Forth in the Formularies of the Westminster Divines, and Witnessed for by the Associate Synod of North America.” The Associate Synod is very closely related to the RPCNA, because two presbyteries of the Associate Synod joined the RPCNA. The article contains a lengthy quote from a sermon by William Sprague, preached in 1835; Sprague’s sermon is largely reproduced in a previous appendix to this paper. The article below has been only slightly edited.]

ART. VIII. On the controversy respecting the use of wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

It has become a question with many, whether the Temperance Society is not likely to prove a curse, instead of a blessing, to the church of God. Already many of its members, (and some of them learned and influential, too) have been led to advocate the disuse of wine in celebrating the Lord's Supper. And from the present aspect of things, there is a strong probability, that the use of wine in that holy ordinance, will be abandoned by at least many of the churches in this part of the union. What friend of the purity of the ordinances of the gospel, can read without alarm, the following extracts from a “Sermon on the danger of being over-wise,” by the Rev. Dr. Sprague, pastor of the 2nd Presbyterian church, in this city especially, too, when he is informed, that for these plain and honest remarks, the Dr. has received the grossest abuse, not only from individuals, but also from some of the religious periodicals of the day!

Another way in which men make themselves over-wise on this subject is by modifying the ordinance [of the supper] to suit their own views; especially by inculcating the doctrine, or adopting the practice, of dispensing with the appropriate elements, or of substituting something in place of them, which the Scripture does not warrant; or to come fully to the point which I now have more particularly in view, and on which the movements of the present day will not allow me any longer to be silent—THE EXCLUSION OF WINE FROM THE LORD’S SUPPER. Do you say that it is impossible there should be any danger of such extravagance in an enlightened community like this, and that I am giving a false alarm in expressing the opinion that there is danger? You shall know then the grounds of my apprehension, and judge for yourselves of their validity. In the first

place, there are several churches in different parts of the country, which, if I am correctly informed, have actually adopted the measure, and are of course strongly committed to its defence and extension. In the next place, there are in many of our churches, individuals, who suffer the cup to pass them in the communion service, on the ground that they believe the use of wine, even on that occasion, to be sinful. And then there are periodicals extensively circulated, lending their influence, in a greater or less degree, to this unhallowed innovation; and one religious newspaper especially, which has never, to my knowledge, been ranked among ultra publications, is giving forth a series of articles from the pen of an aged and highly respectable clergyman, designed to show that the exclusion of all that can intoxicate from the holy communion is essential to the triumph of the Temperance cause. And the writer of these articles is understood to be the author of a premium Tract about to be published, in which he endeavors to establish the same position, and which is soon to be scattered throughout our churches, and for aught I know to be sent to the dwelling of every one of you. And there are other great names too which stand pledged before the community to the same doctrine; and are doing all that industry, and zeal, and talent, and learning can do, to maintain and extend it. A distinguished professor of Biblical literature in one of our theological seminaries—a man whose name is known scarcely less abroad than at home, and is justly regarded as reflecting a lustre upon the character of his country—has told us in an Essay which has just appeared that, though he thinks wine may be used in the communion in such a way as to avoid reproach, and is not himself disposed entirely to abandon it, yet it is by no means necessary to the acceptable celebration of the ordinance; and is to be classed among the unessential accidents of the service, such as receiving the elements in a reclining posture, holding the service in an upper room, and other similar things, in which few churches now think of imitating the apostles. Another professor connected with one of our colleges, and a man too whose talents and acquisitions and virtues no one holds in higher estimation than myself, has written an Essay for publication, in which he endeavors to show that neither bread nor wine is essential to the acceptable observance of the Lord's supper; and that the Temperance cause cannot advance much farther until the use of wine is abolished from this ordinance.

Does one say what harm, after all, can result from the agitation of this subject in our churches, or even from the substitution of water for wine at the Lord's table? Will it not be the same thing, it may be asked, when the first shock occasioned by the innovation is over; and may not the ordinance be celebrated with greater safety, and equal acceptableness I answer, if wine is not essential to the celebration of the communion, by the very conditions of the ordinance, I know not what is. I answer again, the very same spirit which would banish wine from the

Lord's table, would banish the other element, would annihilate the ordinance itself; and hence my respected friend; the professor, tells us that neither bread nor wine is essential to the acceptable celebration of the Lord's supper; and hence another individual with whom I have conversed, more than intimated willingness to have the ordinance entirely abandoned, rather than it should stand in the way of the cause of Temperance. Yet another reason, my friends, for bringing this subject before you:—the infidel is casting upon this movement a look of self-complacent triumph. He is beginning to boast that we are getting rid of our Christianity by piece-meal:—and the signs of the times indicate to him, that under the wonder-working hand of modern theological refinement, both the doctrines and institutions of the gospel will gradually be frittered away, until his creed becomes our creed, and his hope becomes our hope. Is it worthwhile for Christians, by tampering with the ordinances of Christ, to give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme?

I cannot forbear to say too, that this innovation is a deep stab to the comfort of Christians in the commemoration of their Saviour's dying love. When I come to the communion table, and administer or receive the sacramental cup, I wish to think of my Redeemer and his death, and the hopes and blessings which I enjoy through him : I wish not to have my mind distracted by having the question forced upon me, whether I am not committing a sin by taking into my lips a drop of wine; and I hesitate not to say, that they who have taken the lead in this effort, who are urging either from the pulpit, or the press, or even in a more private way, the expediency of banishing wine from the holy supper, are responsible in a great degree for these painful associations by which our communion is embarrassed and embittered;—are responsible for imposing upon many a weak conscience a load which renders the approach to the Lord's table any thing else than a cheerful and profitable occasion.

Some may wonder, by what process of reasoning the ultra advocates of Temperance have come to the conclusion, that it is sinful to use wine in the celebrating of the Lord's Supper. The process is simply this: Not resting satisfied with the old doctrine, in relation to abstinence, which is so obvious both from reason and revelation, that “the use of alcohol, though in itself considered, it be a matter of indifference, that is, neither a sin nor a duty, unless rendered so by circumstances, is totally to be abstained from, whenever such use is calculated to offend or throw a stumbling-block in the way of others,” they have ascertained, in some way or other, that alcohol (the intoxicating principle) is rank poison, and that the smallest use of it, except as a medicine, is sinful, a positive violation of the sixth commandment: And hence alcohol being the same wherever found, whether it be in brandy, or in wine, in rum or in cider, they very naturally conclude, that all their drinks must be equally abandoned, by persons in

health, otherwise great guilt is contracted, murder is committed. Accordingly when the Bible speaks of wine as a blessing and approves of the moderate use of it, they say, that the Bible in such places does not mean alcoholic or fermented wine, but only *must*, by which is meant the pure juice as at first expressed from the grapes and before fermentation has taken place.

This, they say, was the article, which our Lord miraculously produced at the marriage in the land of Galilee. And this they say was that which our Lord used, and commanded to be used, in the celebration of the Supper, as the symbol of his shed blood. To admit that our Saviour enjoined the use of wine, properly so called, in celebrating that ordinance, they are aware, would be to admit that the use of wine is not necessarily sinful, and that therefore their fundamental principle above referred to is false; hence they most tenaciously maintain that the Saviour did not mean wine when he spoke of the “fruit of the vine,” on the occasion of the institution of the Supper, but only *must*, grape juice as it runs pure from the clusters, after being mashed by the feet of him that treadeth in the wine-press.

In lately reading in De Moor we discovered that there were some ancient heretics who strongly opposed the use of wine in the Lord's Supper; and whose principles and mode of reasoning on the subject we found to be very closely imitated by our modern Hydroparastatoc. We had concluded to prepare, for our readers, some account of these ancient profaners of divine ordinances, when, very unexpectedly, we met with the following article in the Evening Journal, and which entirely supercedes the necessity of the labor we had in view.

“In these times of great discoveries on the subject of wine, having some curiosity to know whether the doctrines which now begin to prevail, are really something “new under the sun,” I have been looking into some venerable vellum covered Tomes, and I find the words of the ancient preacher still verified, “that which hath been is now.” —“it hath been already, of old time which was before us.” If you think the result of my enquiries will amuse or instruct your readers; they are at your service.

“In the second Tome of Suicer's Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus, a very elaborate work, (for it is the fruit of twenty-four years of indefatigable labor, and professes to exhibit everything relating to the phrases, rites, dogmas, heresies, *et hujusmodi alia*, mentioned in the Greek Fathers) we have some curious information on the great subject of Wine and Temperance. In p. 467, under the word oinos—oinos—which all the readers of the Temperance Intelligencer know is the Greek word for Wine, the author tells us “that some of the heretics entirely abandoned the use of Wine. This did Tatian, who, says Theodoret, was the leader of the Hydroparastate, (i.e. cold water men,) and the Encratitate, (or temperance men). Concerning the latter, Epiphanius says, “they entirely abstain from the use of Wine, saying that it is from the Devil, and that those who drink it

or use it,' (that is, "who drink it themselves, or provide it for their friends, or persons in their employment,') are wicked men and great sinners.' The followers of Severian also abstain entirely from Wine. Photius testifies the same thing, and assigns as the reason, that it is the cause of intoxication." Of all these heretics, however, the Hydroparastate, or cold water men, appear to have been the most conspicuous. In the account given of them, page 1849, reference is made to Epiphanius, Theodoret, and the Canons of the Concilium Trullanum, in which this is denounced as a 'wicked heresy.' The learned author also quotes Balsamo, and Augustin, who say that "the Hydroparastate, or cold water men, were so called because they used water instead of wine in the Sacramental cup," and also from Clemens Danaeus, who has the following remarks on this subject: "This heresy of the cold water men, I believe, has arisen, not only in part from the Severians, who condemn the use of wine in the church, and partly from the Helcesaitae, who worshipped water as a God, and revived the dogma, or, rather, error, of Thales, the Ephesian Philosopher, but, that it is the same with that of the Encratita, or temperance men, though under a different name. These men were entirely unworthy to be reckoned among the number of Christians, but should have been consigned to the rites of the profane Athenians denominated Nephalia and Hydraphoria, because in these, water instead of wine was poured out as a libation to their idols. The chief thing in this error is, *that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, water should be substituted and presented instead of Wine.*" In the opinion of this writer, the maxim of the Roman Satirist, "nemo repente turpissimus tuit—nobody becomes wicked all at once," was here exemplified, for he goes on to say, "This thing they could not have of nor would have dared to do, had they not condemned Wine according to the ravings (deliriis) of the Severians, and extolled water like Helcesaitae; and regarded as abominable, and to be detested, certain kinds of food, like the Encratitae. The foundation of this error seems to have been laid when men, not content with the holy and simple institution of the Supper which was established by Christ himself, added to it figments of their own. To the two symbols of bread and wine appointed by Christ, they added a third, namely, water, which, they taught, being mixed with the wine, signified the union of Christ with the Church. One change being thus introduced, the progress to another was easy. These water heretics had to advance but another step to substitute water only for the Wine of the original institution. Nor was this all, for who shall say to the ever restless spirit of change, "hitherto shalt thou come and no farther?" It was not long till the Barsaniani and the Semidalita rejected both the bread and the wine, and in their stead took only so much of flour or meal as they could hold between the finger and the thumb, which they scarcely tasted with their lips, and the Manicheans not only rejected wine, but added other practices too profane and abominable to be mentioned. "Thus," adds Danaeus, "nothing was left in the religion of Christ untouched by Satan, all and every thing, even the most solemn, was shamefully polluted and debased."

But to return: “Deservedly therefore,” says Suicerus, p. 1123, “were these followers of Tatian, namely, the Temperance men and the cold water men condemned, who, under the {...}. of temperance, avoided the use of wine, and in its place used water only, in the Holy Sacrament.” This doctrine, characterised by a council already mentioned as a “wicked heresy,” appears to have prevailed to a considerable extent in the primitive church; but, it is worthy of remark, among those only who previously condemned the use of wine. This brought out not only some of the most distinguished men of that day, but even the solemn decrees of councils in condemnation of these errors, and in defence of the purity and simplicity of the institutions of the church. Were not this article too long already, a superabundance of these might be produced. Take the following as a specimen. Suicerus, p. 467: “To the wicked doctrines of these men the ancients manfully opposed themselves.” Can. Apostol. LI. ‘If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the number of the clergy, not on account of the practice of piety, but through contemptible and disgusting singularity, shall abstain from wine, let him either reform, or be deposed and cast out of the church. So also with a laic.’ The LIII Canon of the same council runs thus: ‘If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, on festival days, shall not use flesh-and wine, acting with disgusting singularity, and not with a view to the performance of religious duty, let him be deposed as one having a seared conscience and causing many to offend.” Chrysostom in his first Homily to the people of Antioch thus speaks: “Let there be no intoxication, for wine is the production of God; intoxication is the work of the devil. The cause of intoxication is not wine, but luxury. Accuse not the creature of God, but the folly of thy fellow servant; for by neglecting to punish and correct the transgressor, thou reproachest thy Benefactor. Since, therefore, we have heard that certain persons say such things, let us stop their mouth ; for not the use of wine, but the immoderate use of it, produces intoxication.” Again. “Wine is not evil, but the immoderate use of it.” So also Theodoret. “It is not evil to drink wine, but to drink it immoderately is pernicious.” To the same purpose Photius. And again Chrysostom. “I am not opposed to drinking wine, but I am opposed to getting drunk. Wine is not an evil, but the intemperate use of it is disgraceful; for wine is the gift of God, but intemperance is the invention of the devil.” There have then been temperate excitements before the present, and it is manifestly incorrect to call the ultra temperance doctrines of the present day, and the practices founded upon them, “new measures.” They are no such thing. Neither are their advocates “innovators,” as they are sometimes called. They are only the humble followers of Tatian and Severian, of Thales, the heathen philosopher of Ephesus, and the cold water men and water worshippers of the second and third centuries. It is true, indeed, the moderns have not made the same proficiency as these ancient worthies, but they are making rapid progress in the same track, and to what extent they will go it is impossible to tell. A vast number of “enquirers,” laying it down as an axiom that the use of wine is sinful, or at least a very improper and dangerous thing, already doubt the propriety of using it in the ordinance of

the Lord's Supper; and there can be no doubt if the axiom be just, the conclusion is inevitable. Not a few, like those of old, plead for mixing water with the wine, so as to dilute the sin. Others thinking to avoid this absurdity, propose the use of *must*, which they think is the correct rendering of the Hebrew Tirosh, (a thought which did not occur to the Hydroparastataeans of old; or rather they foolishly thought that *must* was the invention of the devil, as much as wine itself; an opinion in which I believe they were not alone.) And some two or three individuals are spoken of as already nearly equal to their sires. Some may suppose from this paper that the writer is no friend to the temperance cause. It is not so. The temperance cause had his best wishes so long as it confined itself to its legitimate object, and pursued this by lawful means; but when its indiscreet friends, in order to build up this confessedly good cause, go to throw the institutions of our holy religion, and to assail the characters and impeach the motives of such as demur at their unhallowed proceedings, it is time for every serious and temperate man to say "ENOUGH."

Appendix F

Rev. Dunlop Moore, D.D., 1888

[Dunlop Moore, D.D., was born in Ireland in 1830 and studied at the Free Church Theological Seminary in Edinburg. He was ordained on December 4, 1854 by the Presbytery of Dromore, Ireland, and served as a foreign missionary, before ministering as the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in New Brighton, Pennsylvania from 1875 to 1892. He assisted in the translation of the Bible and several tracts into the Gujarati language. This Dunlop Moore should not be confused with his son, also Dunlop Moore, who attended Geneva College and Princeton.

Moore's article on "Sacramental Wine" in *The Presbyterian Review* (January 1882), while not reproduced in this paper, is highly recommended. (See footnote 16 below.)

The essay that follows was published in Philadelphia in 1888. It was appended to a lengthy article by Samuel T. Lowrie, and the combined work was entitled *The Lord's Supper According to the Directory for Worship of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, Enlarged by An Argument Maintaining the Wine Proper for the Communion*.

Moore wrote that the use of unfermented wine is "an innovation of the nineteenth century, and a departure from the practice of the Church Universal in all previous ages." The following essay has been only slightly edited from the original.]

COMMUNION WINE

By the Rev. Dunlop Moore, D.D., New Brighton, Pa.

In discussing briefly the question whether the wine proper to be employed in the observance of the Lord's Supper is the fermented or the unfermented juice of the grape, we remark:

1. This is a modern question. It is only of late years that the opinion has been expressed that Christ's command to drink the cup of the Eucharist referred to an unfermented liquid. We have never seen a genuine quotation from a Christian author, who wrote before the present century, in which it was asserted, or even hinted, that "the fruit of the vine" with which our Saviour instituted the Communion, was the unfermented juice of the grape. It can be demonstrated that the Westminster divines, who have taught in the Shorter Catechism that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated "by giving and receiving bread and wine," took the word "wine" in its proper and usual meaning, and had no idea of what is now called "unfermented wine." The employment of "unfermented wine" in the Sacrament of the Supper is an innovation of the nineteenth century, and a departure from the practice of the Church Universal in all previous ages.

2. The Bible nowhere divides wine into fermented and unfermented, lawful and unlawful. Distilled spirits do not appear to have been known of old among the Israelites. But any fermented drink known to them they were allowed by the law to partake of. (Deut. 14: 26.) The first mention in Scripture of wine (*yayin*) exhibits it as a drink that, taken in excess, causes intoxication. (Gen. 9:20, 21). Hence, when the next mention of wine (*yayin*) occurs in Scripture without any indication of distinction, we are compelled to understand by "wine" the same natural product whose intoxicating property had been already signified. But when Moses next makes mention of wine, it appears as a lawful refreshment. (Gen. 14:18.) The sacred volume, after first letting us know the inebriating quality of what is called wine, proceeds to speak of wine without distinguishing it into different kinds, and lets us see it now causing mischief, now used lawfully. It would be to imitate conjurors, who draw from the same opening in a vessel wine and water, if we should make the same unqualified word wine (*yayin*), as used in the same narrative, yield two liquors possessed of essentially different qualities. Moreover, so rigorous an observer of the law of God as Nehemiah had "all sorts of wine" occasionally on his table. (Neh. 5: 18.) He was the cupbearer of the king of Persia, and we know that the wine which he was accustomed to handle could intoxicate. (Esther 1: 10.) The same wine is, in Prov. 31:4-6, disallowed to some and prescribed to others. The wine which was given by Abigail to David for refreshment appears as belonging to the same store on which her husband Nabal got drunk. (1 Sam. 25: 18, 36.) That *all* wine kept by the Jews in bottles or jars was intoxicating is clear from Jer. 13: 12, 13. Every bottle filled with wine could cause drunkenness. No moralist — Jewish, Christian, or heathen—has ever, in condemning wine or advocating temperance, alluded to the existence of a wine which might be drunk without risk. This fact, if duly weighed, must lead to the rejection of the so-called "two-wine theory" which is now advocated by some in the interest of temperance. It has no foundation in Hebrew or classical antiquity. It has been always customary to hold that the same wine (like the same money or the same tongue) could be a blessing or a curse according to the use made of it. In illustration of this point, it is enough to refer here to Jesus the son of Sirach in *Ecclesiasticus* 31: 25-30; Socrates in the *Symposium* of Xenophon, close of second part; Pliny, *Natural History*, 14:7; Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogus*, chap. 2, "On Drinking." As Dr. W. H. Green, of Princeton, has emphatically affirmed: When wine, either in the Bible or out of it, "is approved or disapproved, this is not due to the different character of the wine itself, but to its rational or immoderate use."

3. That the wine approved of in the New Testament could intoxicate must be evident to every one who studies John 2: 10, or who compares 1 Tim. 5 : 23 with Eph. 5 : 18. Timothy, who was living in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), was directed to use for his stomach's sake and often infirmities "a little" of the wine (*oinos*) on which the Ephesians were forbidden to be drunk. If there were no danger, too, in the use of this good wholesome wine, why should only a little of it be prescribed? Deacons (1 Tim. 3 :8) and aged

women (Tit. 2:3) must not be addicted to "much wine." The injunction of moderation in these cases proves that the good wine, whose use is sanctioned, could not be unfermented, unintoxicating grape juice. There is a temptation in the use of that wine which "makes glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104: 15), or exhilarates, to drink it too freely, and so to become intoxicated by it. Which effect, exhilaration or intoxication, shall be produced by wine, depends on the quantity drunk, just as whether a man shall be invigorated or tired out by walking, depends on the amount of exercise he takes.

4. There is now no unfermented wine in use among the natives of Syria and Palestine. Dr. Selah Merrill, U. S. consul in Jerusalem, and archaeologist of the American Palestine Exploration Society, who tells us that he observed this matter closely, writes in contradiction of the statement that Palestinian wine would not intoxicate: "The fact is, the use of the wine of Palestine produces the legitimate and natural effects of wine; that is, it exhilarates and intoxicates." Dr. W. M. Thomson, author of *The Land and the Book*, in the third volume, p. 236, tells us: "Wine is the fermented juice of the grape ... No other kind of wine is known in Syria, and, so far as can be ascertained, it never had any actual existence. There is no evidence that there has occurred any important variation in the manufacture, the use, or the effects of wine from remote antiquity." The day when ignorance regarding the real character of the wines of Syria and Palestine was excusable, is now past. Sometimes *dibs* is represented as an unfermented wine of Palestine. But it is simply honey of grapes, and is not drunk, but used as a preserve. To call *dibs*, wine, as some advocates of temperance have done, is, in the language of Prof. E. Post, M.D., Beirut, Syria, a most competent witness, "to trifle with the text and meaning of Scripture." Dr. A. A. Hodge was fully justified in declaring that "the traditions of the Fathers, the consensus of the churches, the history of the past, the scholarship of the present, the testimony of travelers and missionaries stand as one unbroken wall in testimony to the fact that to become wine it is necessary that the juice of the grape should be fermented. This is so true that any real or apparent testimony to the contrary is received only as a puzzle of eccentricity or of accident."

5. In support of the two-wine hypothesis, the chief linguistic argument relied on is the occurrence of such expressions in Scripture as the *treading out of wine* (Isa. 16: 10) and the *gathering of wine* (Jer. 40 : 10). Hence it is said fresh grape juice is a proper meaning of wine (*yayin*). But in Psalm 104 : 14, bread (see Hebrew text) is described as "brought forth out of the earth." Is, therefore, grain, bread? Again, we read in Job 28:2, "Iron is taken out of the earth." Is, therefore, unsmelted ore, proper iron? What sorry work might be made with Scripture by refusing to allow the use of the figure prolepsis in such examples! We read in our English Bible that Abraham commanded Eliezer to "take a wife" for his son. (Gen. 24 : 7.) He brought a virgin (v. 43) in the execution of this commission. We ask: Was Eliezer instructed to choose a married woman, a wife, to be the spouse of Isaac? and is "virgin" one of the proper meanings of "wife"? If it be said

that in the charge of Abraham there is a prolepsis, and that his servant was instructed to take for Isaac one who should become a wife to him, then, on the same principle, we can vindicate everywhere in Scripture to the word *yayin*, or wine, the meaning in which it is first introduced to us, namely, the fermented juice of the grape. When "wife" means a virgin in Scripture, when "iron" means unsmelted ore, and "bread" simple unground grain, then wine can, by the same process of interpretation, mean the fresh juice of the grape.

As to the passage in Gen. 40: 11, we would remark that with the same facility with which the practice of drinking in Egypt fresh grape juice is proved from it, we could prove from the context that in that country it was customary of old for lean kine to eat up fat kine, and for thin ears of corn to swallow up good ears. The symbolical representations of a dream or of sculpture cannot be read as plain prose. The wine with which God blessed Israel is described in Deut. 32 : 14: "Thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape." In the Revised Version the rendering runs: "And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine." The word here rendered "wine" is *chemer*. Gesenius, Keil, J. A. Alexander, and all critical commentaries make this word to denote etymologically a fermented drink. And missionaries who use the Arabic and Syriac languages assure us that by the Arabic and Syriac forms of the word—*chamr* and *chamro*—nothing but a fermented drink can be denoted. Every one acquainted with Hebrew sees that this passage, which is so often quoted as testifying in favor of an unfermented wine, testifies, on the contrary, that the wine with which God blessed his people was certainly fermented. The very name here given to it makes this point evident to the Shemitic scholar. We do not believe that there is now in America a Hebrew professor of reputation who would deny that the good, approved wine of the Bible is the fermented juice of the grape.

6. Our Lord, in instituting the holy Supper, called the contents of the cup, "the fruit of the vine." Why did he use this expression? Simply because the Jews of his day employed the phrase to designate the wine partaken of on sacred occasions, as at the Passover and on the evening of the Sabbath. Our Lord did not invent the expression, but availed himself of it in instituting the Supper after the Passover, because it, and no other expression, was employed to denote wine by his countrymen at that festival. The Mishna, "On Blessings," expressly states that in blessing wine, or *yayin*, it is to be called "the fruit of the vine." The fruit of the vine is strictly the grape; but we must have respect to Jewish usage in interpreting the phrase. We avail ourselves of our knowledge of Jewish usage of language in making the Evangelists declare that our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Without consulting rabbinical usage, we could not tell that *mia ton Sabbaton* meant the first day of the week. From the same rabbinical usage we can ascertain that in the time of Christ (as now) "the fruit of the vine" was a phrase that denoted neither fresh grape juice (*tirosh* or *asis*) nor vinegar, but real wine, *yayin*.

How natural is this designation of wine is seen from Herodotus, book i. 212, where the wine by which the Massagetse were overcome is called "the fruit of the vine"! "The fruit of the vine" is employed by no author as a term to designate "unintoxicating wine." By consulting 1 Cor. 11 : 21 we learn that, in celebrating the Lord's Supper in the Church at Corinth, some of the communicants were "drunken." These unworthy members could get drunk on "the fruit of the vine." This testimony of Scripture is decisive as to what "the fruit of the vine" denotes. We add that bread and wine (*yayin* or *oines*) are invariably associated in the Bible. Never is bread associated with new wine. When, then, one element of the Supper is bread, the other element, according to Scriptural usage, is not fresh grape juice, but real wine. If unground grain were eaten at the Supper, then *tirosh*, or must, would, according to Scripture, be its appropriate accompaniment. There is, too, no evidence that the Jews ever tried to keep must from fermentation. Thus every consideration shows that real wine, the fermented juice of the grape, is the proper element in the Supper of the Lord.

7. When people say that no fermented wine could be used in the Passover, they only display their ignorance of Jewish customs. No passage from the Talmud or authoritative work on Jewish usages has ever been quoted in which the use of the pure fermented juice of the grape is forbidden at the Passover. There are statements in the Talmud which show that the wine used in the Passover must have been intoxicating. Provision is made to prevent it from producing drunkenness. Drinks made of five specified kinds of grain are forbidden during the Passover. But drinks of the fermented juice of grapes and other fruits, when carefully prepared by Israelites, are lawful. It is amazing what false statements regarding the wine of the Passover are put forward by those who ought to have taken greater care to ascertain the truth. Jewish Rabbis are represented as affirming what they did not say. Thus, in Dr. A.J. Gordon's tract, *Fermented Wine; or, The Fruit of the Vine*, the Rev. S. Morais, of Philadelphia, is made to say that it is contrary to the law of Moses and all the traditions of the Jews to use fermented wine at the Passover. But this Rabbi, in a letter published in the *Christian Quarterly Review* for July, 1886, states: "The nature of the fermentation prohibited to Israelites on Passover is exclusively that which belongs to grain products. Wines were always, and are now, drunk on that holiday by men considered rigid adherents of the law. It is impossible that any Rabbi, or any Hebrew acquainted with his religion, should have contradicted this fact." Dr. Delitzsch, who knew well what he said, writes in the *Expositor*, January, 1886: "The Jewish Passover wine is really fermented, and only as a substitute in case of need, is unfermented wine permitted. Thus it was fermented wine, too, which Jesus handed to the disciples at his parting meal." Never do the Scriptures speak of a leavened liquor. Christ drank vinegar (which is fermented) during the Passover. (John 19: 30.) But it may be said: In employing unfermented grape juice in the Supper we are using "the fruit of the vine," and so fulfilling the commandment to drink of the cup. In the same way, one might pretend to fulfill the commandment to love his neighbor by loving

the person living in the next house. The question for us is, What did our Lord mean, in enjoining on us to drink "the fruit of the vine"? The worst of all deceptions is that of keeping the word of promise to the ear, and breaking it to the heart. We dare not warp our Lord's words from their real intent by alleging that according to their letter they might mean something which was certainly not in his mind in using them. And in our zeal for the promotion of temperance we must beware of making any change in the Supper of the Lord, which would involve a reflexion on the wisdom or holiness of him who instituted that ordinance.

8. The wine of the Communion certainly did not differ from the wine used in the drink offering under the law. Now let this point be well marked. What the Israelites were required in tithing to consecrate to the Lord is called *tirosh*, or new wine; what was actually presented in the drink offering is called *yayin*, or wine. If unfermented grape juice was used in the drink offering, why is neither of the two words, that properly denote this liquid, ever employed in connection with the drink offering? Why is the word *yayin* used, whose quality we know from its effect -on Noah, Lot, and others, and in regard to an unintoxicating kind of which Scripture is absolutely silent? Indeed, the very wine of the drink offering is once called strong drink. (Num. 28:7, Rev. Vers.) In the Mishna, in the treatise on "Tithes," we are told that wine was tithed when it was in the course of fermentation. No effort could have been made to keep it from completing the process; for in the Mishna, Menachoth 8: 6, wine, sweet, or fumigated, or boiled, is pronounced unfit for offerings. What we know of the wine of the drink offering lets us perceive the significance, of the prohibition given to the priests, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink . . . when ye go into the tabernacle." (Lev. 10:9.) What kind of wine was it which priests could drink in the inner court of the sanctuary? (Ezek. 44: 21.) What, too, was the wine offered to the Rechabites in one of the chambers of the house of the Lord? (Jer. 35:2.) Was it not wine which could intoxicate? Was it not such wine as was used in the drink offering? The Targum of Jonathan will not allow wine of less than forty days old to be poured out before the Lord. (On Num. 28:7.) This time was judged requisite for the fresh juice of the grape to attain by fermenting the quality of wine.

9. In regard to the alleged danger of using real wine in the Communion, we will allow Dr. Willis J. Beecher to speak: "Nor does any great weight seem properly to attach to the argument commonly cited against the use of fermented wines at the Lord's table, namely, that the dormant appetites of inebriates are thereby reawakened, so that many are led to relapse into drunken habits. One should not be accused of unreasonable incredulity, if he is pretty sceptical in regard to alleged instances of this sort. A person at the Communion table is so situated that he cannot immediately indulge the reawakened appetite, even if appetite should be reawakened. He is restrained from yielding to the temptation thus presented until he has first had time for reflection. He is surrounded by specially strong influences to help him to conquer temptation."

We are safe in observing in the proper frame of mind whatsoever the Lord has commanded us to do at his table.

"Morality may spare Her grave concern, her kind suspicion there."

Those who desire to read a fuller discussion of this subject, can consult the articles on "The Bible Wine Question" and on "Sacramental Wine," in *the Presbyterian Review* for January, 1881, and January, 1882.²⁶

²⁶ Moore refers here to his article entitled, "VI. Sacramental Wine." *The Presbyterian Review* (January 1882) Volume 3, pages 78-107. Available in a [Google book](#). Also available on this [web site](#).

Appendix G Suggested Readings

Here is a list of books and articles about the subjects discussed in this web site. Some of these works are cited in this paper. Some express opinions very different from the positions defended and promoted here. All should be read with discernment and care (1 John 4:1, Acts 17:11).

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