

= Christian views on alcohol =

Christian views on wine and alcohol are varied . Christians used " the fruit of the vine " in their central rite ? the Eucharist or Lord 's Supper . Some Christian laymen (e.g. Monica Of Hippo) kept a strict rule of total abstinence , and the contrasting types of wine were distinguished : " not that wine which produces drunkenness , plots against the senses , and destroys the body , but such as gladdens the heart . " (See Early Church section .) Some consumed alcoholic beverages as a common part of everyday life . The latter held that alcohol is a gift from God that makes life more joyous , but that over @-@ indulgence leading to drunkenness is sinful or at least a vice . The Bible indicates wine as a symbol of joy while " strong drink " is a euphemism for drunkenness .

In the mid @-@ 19th century , some Protestant Christians moved from a position of allowing moderate use of alcohol (sometimes called moderationism) to either deciding that not imbibing was wisest in the present circumstances (abstentionism) or prohibiting all ordinary consumption of alcohol because it was believed to be a sin (prohibitionism) . Methodists advocated abstentionism and were early leaders in the temperance movement of the 19th and 20th centuries , which had followers from many Protestant churches . Today , all three of these positions exist in Christianity , but the historic position remains the most common worldwide , due to the adherence by the largest bodies of Christians , namely Anglicanism , Roman Catholicism , and Orthodoxy .

= = Alcohol in the Bible = =

Alcoholic beverages appear in the Bible , both in usage and in poetic expression . The Bible is ambivalent toward alcohol , considering it both a blessing from God that brings merriment and a potential danger that can be unwisely and sinfully abused . Christian views on alcohol come from what the Bible says about it , along with Jewish and Christian traditions . The biblical languages have several words for alcoholic beverages , and though prohibitionists and some abstentionists dissent , there is a broad consensus that the words did ordinarily refer to intoxicating drinks .

The commonness and centrality of wine in daily life in biblical times is apparent from its many positive and negative metaphorical uses throughout the Bible . Positively , for example , wine is used as a symbol of abundance , and of physical blessing . Negatively , wine is personified as a mocker and beer a brawler , and drinking a cup of strong wine to the dregs and getting drunk are sometimes presented as a symbol of God 's judgment and wrath .

The Bible also speaks of wine in general terms as a bringer and concomitant of joy , particularly in the context of nourishment and feasting . Wine was commonly drunk at meals , and the Old Testament prescribed it for use in sacrificial rituals and festal celebrations . The Gospel of John recorded the first miracle of Jesus : making copious amounts of wine at the wedding feast at Cana . Jesus instituted the ritual of the Eucharist at the Last Supper during a Passover celebration , he says that the " fruit of the vine " is a " New Covenant in [his] blood , " though Christians have differed on the implications of this statement (see Eucharistic theologies contrasted) . Alcohol was also used for medicinal purposes in biblical times , and it appears in that context in several passages ? as an oral anesthetic , a topical cleanser and soother , and a digestive aid .

Kings and priests in the Old Testament were forbidden to partake of wine at various times . John the Baptist was a Nazarite from birth . Nazarite vows excluded not only wine , but also vinegar , grapes , and raisins . (Jesus evidently did not take such a vow during the three years of ministry depicted in the gospels , but in fact was even accused by the Pharisees of eating and drinking with sinners . St. Paul further instructs Christians regarding their duty toward immature Christians : " It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall . "

" Even today , [Jewish] priests may not bless the congregation after having even a single glass of wine . "

Virtually all Christian traditions hold that the Bible condemns ordinary drunkenness in many passages , and Easton 's Bible Dictionary says , " The sin of drunkenness ... must have been not uncommon in the olden times , for it is mentioned either metaphorically or literally more than seventy times in the Bible . " Additionally , the consequences of the drunkenness of Noah and Lot " were

intended to serve as examples of the dangers and repulsiveness of intemperance . " St. Paul later chides the Corinthians for becoming drunk on wine served at their attempted celebrations of the Eucharist .

= = Winemaking in biblical times = =

Both the climate and land of Palestine , where most of the Bible takes place , were well @-@ suited to growing grapes , and the wine that the vineyards produced was a valued commodity in ancient times , both for local consumption and for its value in trade . Trade with Egypt was quite extensive . Jews were a wine @-@ drinking culture well before the foundation of Rome . Vintage wines were found in the tomb of King Scorpion in Hierakonpolis . Archaeological evidence suggests that Semitic predecessors were thought to be responsible for the vintages that were found in the tomb . Vineyards were protected from robbers and animals by walls , hedges , and manned watchtowers .

The harvest time brought much joy and play , as " [m] en , women and children took to the vineyard , often accompanied by the sound of music and song , from late August to September to bring in the grapes . " Some grapes were eaten immediately , while others were turned into raisins . Most of them , however , were put into the wine press where the men and boys trampled them , often to music .

The fermentation process started within six to twelve hours after pressing , and the must was usually left in the collection vat for a few days to allow the initial , " tumultuous " stage of fermentation to pass . The wine makers soon transferred it either into large earthenware jars , which were then sealed , or , if the wine were to be transported elsewhere , into wineskins (that is , partially tanned goat @-@ skins , sewn up where the legs and tail had protruded but leaving the opening at the neck) . After six weeks , fermentation was complete , and the wine was filtered into larger containers and either sold for consumption or stored in a cellar or cistern , lasting for three to four years . Even after a year of aging , the vintage was still called " new wine , " and more aged wines were preferred .

Spices and scents were often added to wine in order to hide " defects " that arose from storage that was often not sufficient to prevent all spoiling . One might expect about 10 % of any given cellar of wine to have been ruined completely , but vinegar was also created intentionally for dipping bread among other uses .

The Feast of Booths was a prescribed holiday that immediately followed the harvest and pressing of the grapes .

= = Alcohol in Christian history and tradition = =

It is disputed whether the regular use of wine in the celebration of the Eucharist and in daily life were the virtually universal and undisputed practice in Christianity for over 1 @, @ 800 years . During the 19th and early 20th century , as a general sense of prohibitionism arose , many Christians , particularly some Protestants in the United States , came to believe that the Bible prohibited alcohol or that the wisest choice in modern circumstances was for the Christian to abstain from alcohol willingly .

= = = Before Christ = = =

The Hebraic opinion of wine in the time before Christ was decidedly positive : wine is part of the world God created and is thus " necessarily inherently good , " though excessive use is soundly condemned . The Jews emphasized joy in the goodness of creation rather than the virtue of temperance , which the Greek philosophers advocated .

As the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile (starting in 537 BC) and the events of the Old Testament drew to a close , wine was " a common beverage for all classes and ages , including the very young ; an important source of nourishment ; a prominent part in the festivities of the people ; a widely appreciated medicine ; an essential provision for any fortress ; and an important commodity ,

" and it served as " a necessary element in the life of the Hebrews . " Wine was also used ritualistically to close the Sabbath and to celebrate weddings , circumcisions , and Passover .

Although some abstentionists argue that wine in the Bible was almost always cut with water greatly decreasing its potency for inebriation , there is general agreement that , while Old Testament wine was sometimes mixed with various spices to enhance its flavor and stimulating properties , it was not usually diluted with water , and wine mixed with water is used as an Old Testament metaphor for corruption . Among the Greeks , however , the cutting of wine with water was a common practice used to reduce potency and improve taste . By the time of the writing of 2 Maccabees (2nd or 1st century BC) , the Greeks had conquered Palestine under Alexander the Great , and the Hellenistic custom had apparently found acceptance with the Jews and was carried into Jewish rituals in New Testament times .

Under the rule of Rome , which had conquered Palestine under Pompey (see Iudaea Province) , the average adult male who was a citizen drank an estimated liter (about a quarter of a gallon , or a modern @-@ day bottle and a third - about 35 oz .) of wine per day , though beer was more common in some parts of the world .

= = = Early Church = = =

The Apostolic Fathers make very little reference to wine . Clement of Rome (died 100) said : " Seeing , therefore , that we are the portion of the Holy One , let us do all those things which pertain to holiness , avoiding all evil @-@ speaking , all abominable and impure embraces , together with all drunkenness , seeking after change , all abominable lusts , detestable adultery , and execrable pride . " The earliest references from the Church Fathers make it clear that the early church used in the Eucharist wine - which was customarily mixed with water . The Didache , an early Christian treatise which is generally accepted to be from the late 1st century , instructs Christians to give a portion of their wine in support of a true prophet or , if they have no prophet resident with them , to the poor .

Clement of Alexandria (died c . 215) wrote in a chapter about drinking that he admires those who adopt an austere life and " flee as far as possible from wine , shunning it as they would the danger of fire " , and he suggests the young abstain from wine so as not to inflame their " wild impulses . " He says Christ did not teach affected by it . " ... the soul itself is wisest and best when dry . " But he says taking a little wine as medicine or for pleasure after the day 's work is acceptable for those who are " moored by reason and time " such that they aren 't tempted by drunkenness , and nevertheless he encourages mixing " as much water as possible " in with the wine to inhibit inebriation . He also says wine is an appropriate symbol of Jesus ' blood .

Tertullian (died 220) forbade ministers drinking in church , citing the Scriptural precedent : ? the Lord said to Aaron : ? Wine and spirituous liquor shall ye not drink , thou and thy son after thee , whenever ye shall enter the tabernacle , or ascend unto the sacrificial altar ; and ye shall not die . ? [Lev . 10 : 9] So true is it , that such as shall have ministered in the Church , being not sober , shall ? die . ? Thus , too , in recent times He upbraids Israel : ? And ye used to give my sanctified ones wine to drink . ? [Amos 2 : 12] ?

Origen (died 253) ? abstained from the use of wine , and of all other things beyond his necessary food . ?

Cyprian (died 258) rejected undiluted wine in the Eucharist . He explained the meaning : water , being the people of Christ , was mingled with the blood of Christ . Also , it would be better to prevent them who drank it from getting drunk . (But Cyprian suspected some of the people who used water on its own in the Eucharist did so from a disbelief in the expressed blood of Christ .)

Methodius (died 312) said : " For we perceive from the Scriptures two kinds of vines which were separate from each other , and were unlike ...

The sober and joy @-@ producing vine ...

the poison of dragons ... it is ordered that a virgin shall not taste of this vine , so that she may be sober and watchful ...

" Moreover , it is not only forbidden to virgins in any way to touch those things which are made from that vine , but even such things as resemble them and are akin to them ... all that produces

drunkenness and distraction of mind , besides wine . " Jerome (died 420) said similar things against drinking .

Church rules against drinking entertainments are found in The Synod of Laodicea (363) :

Rule XXIV : " No one of the priesthood , from presbyters to deacons , and so on in the ecclesiastical order to subdeacons , readers , singers , exorcists , door @-@ keepers , or any of the class of the Ascetics , ought to enter a tavern . "

Rule LV : " NEITHER members of the priesthood nor of the clergy , nor yet laymen , may club together for drinking entertainments . "

Equivalent non @-@ drinking rules are also found in the oldest of the " Apostolic Canons " and in the African churches . (See Monica 's bishop .) Again , the Quinisext Council in Trullo (692 AD) restated the rule : " Let no cleric be permitted to keep a ' public house . ' For if it be not permitted to enter a tavern , much more is it forbidden to serve others in it and to carry on a trade which is unlawful for him . But if he shall have done any such thing , either let him desist or be deposed . "

Basil the Great (died 379) repudiated the views of some dualistic heretics who abhorred marriage , rejected wine , and called God 's creation " polluted " and who substituted water for wine in the Eucharist .

Monica of Hippo (died 387) eagerly kept the strict rule of total abstinence , which her bishop required . She had never let herself drink much at all , not even " more than one little cup of wine , diluted according to her own temperate palate , which , out of courtesy , she would taste . " But now she willingly drank none at all . Augustine cited a reason for her bishop 's rule : " even to those who would use it with moderation , lest thereby an occasion of excess might be given to such as were drunken . "

John of Lycopolis (died 395) said : " ... if there is any sharp wine I excommunicate it , but I drink the good . " Gregory of Nyssa (died 395) made the same distinction between types of wine (intoxicating and non @-@ intoxicating) . " not that wine which produces drunkenness , plots against the senses , and destroys the body , but such as gladdens the heart , the wine which the Prophet recommends "

John Chrysostom (died 407) said : " they who do not drink take no thought of the drunken . " A homily on 1 Timothy 5 : 23 stresses moderation and adds that the biblical passage in question is useful for refuting heretics and immature Christians who say there should be no wine . He emphasizes the goodness of God 's creation and adjures : " Let there be no drunkenness ; for wine is the work of God , but drunkenness is the work of the devil . Wine makes not drunkenness ; but intemperance produces it . Do not accuse that which is the workmanship of God , but accuse the madness of a fellow mortal . "

The virtue of temperance passed from Greek philosophy into Christian ethics and became one of the four cardinal virtues under St. Ambrose and St. Augustine . Drunkenness , on the other hand , is considered a manifestation of gluttony , one of the seven deadly sins as compiled by Gregory the Great in the 6th century .

= = = Middle Ages = = =

The decline of the Roman Empire brought with it a significant drop in the production and consumption of wine in western and central Europe , but the Eastern and Western Church (particularly the Byzantines) preserved the practices of viticulture and winemaking .

The medieval monks , renowned as the finest creators of beer and wine , were allotted about five liters of beer per day , and were allowed to drink beer (but not wine) during fasts . This was justified by the church . Bread and water that made up ale 's ingredients was considered to not be a sin like that of wine . Brewing in monasteries increased and a number of modern breweries can trace their origins back to medieval monasteries . Benedict of Nursia (died c . 547) , who formulated the monastic rules governing the Benedictines , seems to prefer that monks should do without wine as a daily staple , but he indicates that the monks of his day found the old regulation too burdensome . Thus he offers the concession of a quarter liter (or perhaps , a half liter) of wine per day as sufficient for nourishment , with allowance for more in special circumstances and for none as a

punishment for repeated tardiness . Even so , he believes that abstinence is the best path for those who have a gift from God allowing them to restrain their bodily appetites .

Thomas Aquinas (died 1274) , a Dominican friar and the " Doctor Angelicus " of the Catholic Church , says that moderation in wine is sufficient for salvation but that for certain persons perfection requires abstinence , and this was dependent upon their circumstance . With regard to the Eucharist , he says that grape wine should be used and that " must " , unlike juice from unripe grapes , qualifies as wine because its sweetness will naturally turn it into wine . So freshly pressed must is indeed usable (preferably after filtering any impurities) .

Drinking among monks was not universal , however , and in 1319 Bernardo Tolomei founded the Olivetan Order , initially following a much more ascetic Rule than Benedict 's . The Olivetans uprooted all their vineyards , destroyed their wine @-@ presses , and were " fanatical total abstainers , " but the rule was soon relaxed .

Because the Catholic Church requires properly fermented wine in the Eucharist ? with a modern exception for alcoholic or allergic priests ? wherever Catholicism spread , the missionaries also brought grapevines so they could make wine and celebrate the Mass . The Catholic Church continues to celebrate a number of early and medieval saints related to alcohol ? for instance , St. Adrian , patron saint of beer ; St. Amand , patron saint of brewers , barkeepers , and wine merchants ; St. Martin , the so @-@ called patron saint of wine ; St. Vincent , patron saint of vintners .

Wine has a place in the divine services of the Orthodox Church , not only in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist) , but also at the artoklassia (blessing of bread , wine , wheat and oil during the All Night Vigil) and in the " common cup " of wine which is shared by the bride and groom during an Orthodox wedding service . A small amount of warm wine (zapivka) is taken by the faithful together with a piece of antidoron after receiving Holy Communion . In the Serbian Orthodox Church wine is used in the celebration of a service known as the Slava on feast days . The fasting rules of the Orthodox Church forbid the consumption of wine (and by extension , all alcoholic beverages) on most fast days throughout the year . The Orthodox celebrate St. Tryphon as the patron saint of vines and vineyard workers .

= = = Reformation = = =

As the Protestant Reformation began , the Reformers from Luther and Calvin to Zwingli and Knox strongly supported the enjoyment of wine as a biblical blessing , and Calvin 's annual salary in Geneva included seven barrels of wine . With Calvin at Geneva , " Low taverns and drinking shops were abolished , and intemperance diminished . " The Lutheran Formula of Concord (1576) and the Reformed Christian confessions of faith also make explicit mention of and assume the use of wine , as does the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and the Methodist Articles of Religion (1784) . In the Dordrecht Confession of Faith (1632) , even the radical Anabaptists , who sought to expunge every trace of Roman Catholicism and to rely only on the Bible , also assumed wine was to be used , and despite their reputation as killjoys , the English Puritans were temperate partakers of " God 's good gifts , " including wine and ale .

= = = Colonial America = = =

As the Pilgrim Fathers set out for America , they brought a considerable amount of alcohol with them for the voyage (more than 28 @,@ 617 liters = 7 @,@ 560 gallons , or 4 litres / person / day) , and once settled , they served alcohol at " virtually all functions , including ordinations , funerals , and regular Sabbath meals . " M. E. Lender summarizes the " colonists had assimilated alcohol use , based on Old World patterns , into their community lifestyles " and that " [I] ocal brewing began almost as soon as the colonists were safely ashore . " Increase Mather , a prominent colonial clergyman and president of Harvard , expressed the common view in a sermon against drunkenness : " Drink is in itself a good creature of God , and to be received with thankfulness , but the abuse of drink is from Satan ; the wine is from God , but the drunkard is from the Devil . " This Old World

attitude is likewise found among the early Methodists (Charles Wesley , George Whitefield , Adam Clarke , Thomas Coke) and Baptists (John Gill and John Bunyan) .

= = = Methodism = = =

Methodist founder John Wesley warned : " You see the wine when it sparkles in the cup , and are going to drink of it . I tell you there is poison in it ! and , therefore , beg you to throw it away . "

Wesley likewise deplored distilled beverages such as brandy and whisky when they were used non @-@ medicinally , and he said the many distillers who sold indiscriminately to anyone were nothing more than poisoners and murderers accursed by God . In 1744 , the directions the Wesleys gave to the Methodist band societies (small groups of Methodists intended to support living a Christian life) required them " to taste no spirituous [i.e. , distilled] liquor ... unless prescribed by a physician . " At the 1780 Methodist Conference in Baltimore , the churchmen opposed distilled liquors and determined to " disown those who would not renounce the practice " of producing it . In opposing liquors , the American Methodists anticipated the first wave of the temperance movement that would follow . They expanded their membership rule regarding alcohol to include other alcoholic beverages over the next century . Despite pressure from interested parties to relax rules of all kinds , the American Methodists afterwards reverted to Wesley 's ? namely , to avoid " [d] runkenness , buying or selling spirituous [i.e. , distilled] liquors , or drinking them , unless in cases of extreme necessity " .

Adam Clarke indicated the fruit of the vine at the Last Supper was pure and incomparable to what some think of as wine today . Wesley 's Articles of Religion , adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church (a precursor of the United Methodist Church) in 1784 , assume in Articles XVIII that wine is to be used in the Lord 's supper and in Article XIX that it should given to all the people , not ministers only as in the Catholic practice of the time . Bishops in America Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury comment on the latter article saying , " St. Paul does not complain of [the lay Corinthians '] drinking the wine at the Lord 's supper ... but of their both eating and drinking most intemperately " (emphasis in original) . Asbury strongly urged citizens to lay aside the use of alcohol . Likewise , the listed duties for Methodist preachers indicate that they should choose water as their common drink and use wine only in medicinal or sacramental contexts , with Coke and Asbury commenting that frequent fasting and abstinence are " highly necessary for the divine life . "

Later , British Methodists , in particular the Primitive Methodists , took a leading role in the temperance movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries . Methodists saw alcoholic beverages , and alcoholism , as the root of many social ills and tried to persuade people to abstain from these . Temperance appealed strongly to the Methodist doctrines of sanctification and perfection .

= = = Temperance movement = = =

In the midst of the social upheaval accompanying the American Revolution and urbanization induced by the Industrial Revolution , drunkenness was on the rise and was blamed as a major contributor to the increasing poverty , unemployment , and crime . Yet the temperate sentiments of the Methodists were shared only by a few others , until the publication of a tract by eminent physician and patriot Benjamin Rush , who argued against the use of " ardent spirits " (i.e. , distilled alcohol) , introduced the notion of addiction , and prescribed abstinence as the only cure . Some prominent preachers like Lyman Beecher picked up on Rush 's theme and galvanized the temperance movement to action . Though losing influence during the American Civil War , afterward the movement experienced its second wave , spearheaded by the Women 's Christian Temperance Union , and it was so successful in achieving its goals that Catherine Booth , co @-@ founder of the Salvation Army , could observe in 1879 that in America " almost every [Protestant] Christian minister has become an abstainer . " The movement saw the passage of anti @-@ drinking laws in several states and peaked in its political power in 1919 with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution , which established prohibition as the law of the entire country but which was repealed in 1933 by the Twenty @-@ first Amendment .

Initially the vast majority of the temperance movement had opposed only distilled alcohol , which they saw as making drunkenness inexpensive and easy , and espoused moderation and temperance in the use of other alcoholic beverages . Fueled in part by the Second Great Awakening , which emphasized personal holiness and sometimes perfectionism , the temperance message changed to the outright elimination of alcohol .

Consequently , alcohol itself became an evil in the eyes of many (but not all) abstainers and so had to be expunged from Christian practice ? especially from the holy rite of the Lord 's Supper . The use of a grape @-@ based drink other than wine for the Lord 's Supper took a strong hold in many churches , including American Protestantism , though some churches had detractors who thought wine was to be given strong preference in the rite . Some denominational statements required " unfermented wine " for the Lord 's Supper . For example , the Wesleyan Methodists (since founded 1843 , some fifty years after Wesley 's death) required " unfermented wine " .

Since grape juice begins naturally fermenting upon pressing , opponents of wine utilized alternate methods of creating their ritual drink such as reconstituting concentrated grape juice , boiling raisins , or adding preservatives to delay fermenting and souring . In 1869 , Thomas Bramwell Welch , an ordained Wesleyan Methodist minister , discovered a way to pasteurize grape juice , and he used his particular preservation method to prepare juice for the Lord 's Supper at a Methodist Episcopal church .

From 1838 to 1845 , Father Mathew , the Irish apostle of temperance , administered an abstinence pledge to some three to four million of his countrymen , though his efforts had little permanent effect there , and then starting in 1849 to more than 500 @,@ 000 Americans , chiefly his fellow Irish Catholics , who formed local temperance societies but whose influence was limited . In 1872 the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America united these societies and by 1913 reached some 90 @,@ 000 members including the juvenile , women 's , and priestly contingents . The Union pursued a platform of " moral suasion " rather than legislative prohibition and received two papal commendations . In 1878 Pope Leo XIII praised the Union 's determination to abolish drunkenness and " all incentive to it , " and in 1906 Pope Pius X lauded its efforts in " persuading men to practise one of the principal Christian virtues ? temperance . " By the time the 18th Amendment was up for consideration , however , Archbishop Messmer of Milwaukee denounced the prohibition movement as being founded on an " absolutely false principle " and as trying to undermine the Church 's " most sacred mystery , " the Eucharist , and he forbade pastors in his archdiocese from assisting the movement but suggested they preach on moderation . In the end , Catholicism was largely unaffected in doctrine and practice by the movements to eliminate alcohol from church life , and it retained its emphasis on the virtue of temperance in all things .

Similarly , while the Lutheran and Anglican churches felt some pressure , they did not alter their moderationist position . Even the English denominational temperance societies refused to make abstinence a requirement for membership , and their position remained moderationist in character . It was non @-@ Lutheran Protestantism from which the Temperance movement drew its greatest strength . Many Methodists , Baptists , Presbyterians , and other Protestants signed on to the prohibitionist platform .

" Despite the Scottish heritage of whisky drinking , Presbyterians were strong supporters of temperance and prohibition . They believed (with some justification) that ? the demon drink ? was destructive of family life . The church was a stronghold of the temperance organisation the Band of Hope ... which encouraged youth ... to sign a pledge to abstain from alcohol . Teetotallers also succeeded in persuading the church to use grape juice rather than fortified wine in the sacrament of communion . "

The 1881 assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America said " the common traffic in , and the moderate use of intoxicants as a beverage are the source of all these evils . " In 1843 , the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America 's general assembly (generally considered part of the conservative Old School) considered and narrowly rejected making the selling of alcoholic beverages grounds for excommunication from the church .

The legislative and social effects resulting from the temperance movement peaked in the early 20th century and began to decline afterward . The effects on church practice were primarily a

phenomenon in American Protestantism and to a lesser extent in the British Isles , the Nordic countries , and a few other places . The practice of the Protestant churches were slower to revert , and some bodies , though now rejecting their formerly prohibitionist platform , still retain vestiges of it such as using grape juice alone or beside wine in the Lord 's supper .

= = Current views = =

Today , the views on alcohol in Christianity can be divided into moderationism , abstentionism , and prohibitionism . Abstentionists and prohibitionists are sometimes lumped together as " teetotalers " (compare list of teetotalers) , sharing some similar arguments . However , prohibitionists abstain from alcohol as a matter of law (that is , they believe God requires abstinence in all ordinary circumstances) , while abstentionists abstain as a matter of prudence (that is , they believe total abstinence is the wisest and most loving way to live in the present circumstances) .

Some groups of Christians fall entirely or virtually entirely into one of these categories , while others are divided between them . Fifty @-@ two percent of Evangelical leaders around the world say drinking alcohol is incompatible with being a good Evangelical . Even now nominally " Christian " countries still have 42 % who say it is incompatible . Evangelicals in Asia , Africa , and also in Muslim @-@ majority countries are decidedly against drinking .

= = = Moderationism = = =

The moderationist position is held by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox , and within Protestantism , it is accepted by Anglicans , Lutherans and many Reformed churches . Moderationism is also accepted by Jehovah 's Witnesses .

Moderationism argues that , according to the biblical and traditional witness , (1) alcohol is a good gift of God that is rightly used in the Eucharist and for making the heart merry , and (2) while its dangers are real , it may be used wisely and moderately rather than being shunned or prohibited because of potential abuse . Moderationism holds that temperance (that is , moderation or self @-@ control) in all of one 's behavior , not abstinence , is the biblical norm .

On the first point , moderationists reflect the Hebrew mindset that all creation is good . The ancient Canons of the Apostles , which became part of Canon Law in the eastern and western churches , likewise allows church leaders and laity to abstain from wine for mortification of the flesh but requires that they not " abominate " or detest it , which attitude " blasphemously abuses " the good creation . Going further , John Calvin says that " it is lawful to use wine not only in cases of necessity , but also thereby to make us merry , " and in his Genevan Catechism , he answers that wine is appropriate in the Lord 's Supper because " 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 . "

On the second point , Martin Luther employs a *reductio ad absurdum* to counter the idea that abuse should be met with disuse : " [W] e must not ... reject [or] condemn anything because it is abused ... [W] ine and women bring many a man to misery and make a fool of him (Ecclus . 19 : 2 ; 31 : 30) ; so [we would need to] kill all the women and pour out all the wine . " In dealing with drunkenness at the love feast in Corinth , St. Paul does not require total abstinence from drink but love for one another that would express itself in moderate , selfless behavior . However , moderationists approve of voluntary abstinence in several cases , such as for a person who finds it too difficult to drink in moderation and for the benefit of the " weaker brother , " who would err because of a stronger Christian exercising his or her liberty to drink .

While all moderationists approve of using (fermented) wine in the Eucharist in principle (Catholics , the Orthodox , and Anglicans require it) , because of prohibitionist heritage and a sensitivity to those who wish to abstain from alcohol , many offer either grape juice or both wine and juice at their celebrations of the Lord 's Supper . Some Christians mix some water with the wine following ancient tradition , and some attach a mystical significance to this practice .

= = = = Comparison = = = =

In addition to lexical and historical differences , moderationism holds that prohibitionism errs by confusing the Christian virtues of temperance and moderation with abstinence and prohibition and by locating the evil in the object that is abused rather than in the heart and deeds of the abuser . Moreover , moderationists suggest that the prohibitionist and abstentionist positions denigrate God 's creation and his good gifts and deny that it is not what goes into a man that makes him evil but what comes out (that is , what he says and does) . The Bible never uses the word ' wine ' of communion . Yet moderationists hold that in banishing wine from communion and dinner tables , prohibitionists and abstentionists go against the ' witness of the Bible ' and the church throughout the ages and implicitly adopt a Pharisaical moralism that is at odds with the what moderationists consider the right approach to biblical ethics and the doctrines of sin and sanctification .

= = = Abstentionism = = =

The abstentionist position is held by many Baptists , Pentecostals , Nazarene , Methodists , and other evangelical and Protestant groups including the Salvation Army . Prominent proponents of abstentionism include Billy Graham , John F. MacArthur , R. Albert Mohler , Jr . , and John Piper .

Abstentionists believe that although alcohol consumption is not inherently sinful or necessarily to be avoided in all circumstances , it is generally not the wisest or most prudent choice . While most abstentionists do not require abstinence from alcohol for membership in their churches , they do often require it for leadership positions .

Some reasons commonly given for voluntary abstention are :

The Bible warns that alcohol can hinder moral discretion . As discussed above , Proverbs 31 : 4 @-@ 5 warns kings and rulers that they might " forget what is decreed , and pervert the rights of all the afflicted . " Some abstentionists speak of alcohol as " corrupt [ing] " the body and as a substance that can " impair my judgment and further distract me from God ? s will for my life . "

Christians must be sensitive to the " weaker brother " , that is , the Christian who believes imbibing to be a sin . On this point MacArthur says , " [T] he primary reason I don 't do a lot of things I could do , including drinking wine or any alcoholic beverage , [is] because I know some believers would be offended by it ... [M] any Christians will drink their beer and wine and flaunt their liberty no matter what anyone thinks . Consequently , there is a rift in the fellowship . "

Christians should make a public statement against drunkenness because of the negative consequences it can have on individuals , families , and society as a whole . Some abstentionists believe that their witness as persons of moral character is also enhanced by this choice .

Additionally , abstentionists argue that while drinking may have been more acceptable in ancient times (for instance , using wine to purify polluted drinking water) , modern circumstances have changed the nature of a Christian 's responsibility in this area . First , some abstentionists argue that wine in biblical times was weaker and diluted with water such that drunkenness was less common , though few non @-@ abstentionists accept this claim as wholly accurate or conclusive . Also , the invention of more efficient distillation techniques has led to more potent and cheaper alcohol , which in turn has lessened the economic barrier to drinking to excess compared to biblical times .

= = = = Comparison = = = =

On historical and lexical grounds , many abstentionists reject the argument of prohibitionists that wine in the Bible was not alcoholic and that imbibing is nearly always a sin . Piper summarizes the abstentionist position on this point :

The consumption of food and drink is in itself no basis for judging a person 's standing with God ... [The Apostle Paul 's] approach to these abuses [of food and drink] was never to forbid food or drink . It was always to forbid what destroyed God 's temple and injured faith . He taught the principle of love , but did not determine its application with regulations in matters of food and drink .

Abstentionists also reject the position of moderationists that in many circumstances Christians

should feel free to drink for pleasure because abstentionists see alcohol as inherently too dangerous and not " a necessity for life or good living , " with some even going so far as to say , " Moderation is the cause of the liquor problem . "

= = = Prohibitionism = = =

The prohibitionist position has experienced a general reduction of support since the days of prohibitionism as a movement , with many of its advocates becoming abstentionists instead . Groups adopting prohibitionist positions include the Southern Baptist Convention and Seventh @-@ day Adventists . The former group resolved that their " churches be urged to give their full moral support to the prohibition cause , and to give a more liberal financial support to dry organizations which stand for the united action of our people against the liquor traffic . " Charles Spurgeon : " I wish the man who made the law to open them had to keep all the families that they have brought to ruin . Beer shops are the enemies of the home ; therefore , the sooner their licenses are taken away , the better . " The founder of the Salvation Army William Booth was a prohibitionist , and saw alcohol as evil in itself and not safe for anyone to drink in moderation . In 1990 , the Salvation Army re @-@ affirms : " It would be inconsistent for any Salvationist to drink while at the same time seeking to help others to give it up . " David Wilkerson founder of Teen Challenge said similar things to The Assembly of God : " a little alcohol is too much since drinking in moderation provides Satan an opening to cruel deception . " Billy Sunday : " After all is said that can be said on the liquor traffic , its influence is degrading on the individual , the family , politics and business and upon everything that you touch in this old world . "

Prohibitionists such as Stephen Reynolds and Jack Van Impe hold that the Bible forbids partaking of alcohol altogether , with some arguing that the alleged medicinal use of wine in 1 Timothy 5 : 23 is a reference to unfermented grape juice . They argue that the words for alcoholic beverages in the Bible can also refer to non @-@ alcoholic versions such as unfermented grape juice , and for this reason the context must determine which meaning is required . In passages where the beverages are viewed negatively , prohibitionists understand them to mean the alcoholic drinks , and where they are viewed positively , they understand them to mean non @-@ alcoholic drinks . Prohibitionists also accuse most Bible translators of exhibiting a bias in favor of alcohol that obscures the meaning of the original texts .

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints , the largest body of the Latter Day Saint movement , also teaches that " God has spoken against the use of ... [a] lcohol . " They base this teaching on the Word of Wisdom , a section in Doctrine and Covenants which is part of the Mormon canon , that recommends against the ordinary use of alcohol , though it makes an exception for the use of wine in the sacrament , a similar rite to the Eucharist . However , the church now uses water instead of wine in the sacrament , and since 1851 , the Word of Wisdom 's advice for wise living has been considered " a binding commandment on all Church members . "

Many Prohibitionist Christians have claimed that the wine Jesus created in John 2 and drank at the Last Supper were non @-@ alcoholic grape juice ; however , the Greek word oinos , used in the account of the wedding feast in Cana , is also used to describe alcohol in Ephesians 5 : 18 .