

RUSSELL'S RUMINATIONS
A LETTER OF ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON ISSUES
OF INTEREST TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Cobden, Il. 62920
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Dear Friends and Soon-to-be-Friends:

Finally, here in this first month of the Fall season, I commence this letter which should have been written last May... or at least in late August. My goal (in concert with the Holy Spirit) is to have four of these in each year, but I have not yet established the rhythm that will produce this number. So I feel a tinge of guilt and regret, but this is more than balanced by the joy of getting to the actual writing of a Letter that should be provocative, consoling, and perhaps a bit controversial.

I shan't repeat the story of my coming to have the Source that I shall quote extensively in these pages. That was in Vol. II, No. 2 and again in Vol. III, No. 1. It is sufficient to say that I still rise early three or four mornings a week and am in a relationship with the Holy Spirit, which produces written Teachings on themes from the very personal to the incredibly universal. I sometimes seek these meditations, sometimes I come to them out of a sense of duty, and sometimes I get a "clear call to get up and hear." The quality of the Teaching does not seem to be affected by the differences in my motivations.

Certainly it is presumptuous of me to claim that these originate in the Holy Spirit, for the Bible does not tell clearly how the Spirit will manifest Him/Herself. But Jesus says to his disciples in his long discourse in the Gospel of John,

"... the Father will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, for it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, for he lives with you now and someday shall be in you... he will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you... When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes he shall guide you into all truth..."

And I do humbly aver that these quotes I offer, in this Letter, are part of that truth.

At the end of a Teaching in June of 1980 came this paragraph, and I offer it as my small claim to the heritage promised above.

You remember the story that involved Me as Jesus here in the earth... of the healing of the man blind from birth. "It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that My works might be made manifest in him." In a more positive way, this is the best explanation of what We do here together. It is not that you are of great virtue... are sinless or righteous. Rather you are a fairly well developed spirit, well established in a field that I can use... so I just manifest Myself through you. You

are to be no more glorified than the blind man. You are no one special. Still, you are very special, and, yes, I have elected you to this task. Keep the balance of these two truths. You are not special... and yet you are. This is a fundamental part of your rhythm. Feel it today. Shalom

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As I sit down with the Teachings that shall be my original source material I find that I have fifteen of them, each of which has a title with a definite relationship to a theme... an area of study... an area of human concern. And it is none other than Humans and Beverage Alcohol... or “Man and Her Favorite Mood Modifier,” as I have entitled the professional presentation I have made the most often, to the largest number of people, and across the greatest geographic area... Maine to Florida... to Oregon to California... to Hawaii to Japan. I knew, as these Teachings relating to alcohol accumulated, that I would eventually put them together in this format, but I also felt some reluctance. I’m not really sure why... I just have felt such.

But then, in the late Spring, I was told definitely that this was to be the focus... Alcohol and Spirit. Now my dilemma and challenge, as I look at copies of relevant Teachings before me, marked for important passages, is how to choose from all of the wondrous words and ideas those that shall be included. The answer to that, assuredly, is to abort this “brief” introduction and get on with the real Ruminations.

Well, not before I make two other observations. One is that education about alcohol has been one of my professional specialities for over 25 years. I started a study of youth drinking when I was the Dean of Freshmen at Punahou School in 1956, and then I went to the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies in 1959 on a scholarship from the United Presbyterian Church. My involvement with the field continues to this day (though my range of personal and professional interests has broadened considerably beyond alcohol over the last ten years).

The other observation is in relation to my process: I do not read previous Teachings over before receiving a new one. So it is amazing to me how consistent these are. The integrity is with the Spirit. I never refer to Teachings on the subject before writing, and I do no editing whatsoever. Just thought you might want to know this.

There are a couple of possible introductions, but I’d like to start with the first full Teaching on this theme, one titled “Alcohol”.

Alcohol is one of My creations. One of my ancient ones. It does make glad the heart of man, and as you ask this in your prayer I hear, for this is its fundamental mission. But there is also a rhythm. There is also a time for every matter. And so alcohol, like love, marriage, rich luscious food, and even fire and water, has the capacity to ruin and destroy. Peter was one... Thad was one... who found it to be a poison. But it still is one of my blessings. (from “Alcohol,” July 2, 1979)

This states some important, fundamental ideas... first that God, for whom the Spirit speaks, does claim alcohol as a creation (which will be amplified later)... and that its purpose is to make glad the human heart. However, it also can be destructive, and to show that He always prefers to be concrete and

specific, He mentions our son, Peter, killed at 17, and Lenore's brother Thad, killed at 50, as representative of those whose lives were adversely affected by it. Yet the assertion is that it is still a blessing. As Fall is here I look forward to a warm cheery fire in the fireplace, morning and night. Yet I also read of a recent plane crash in which a significant proportion of the fatalities were caused by fire... an awful way to die, I'd say. So, what is fire... or a juicy steak... or marriage?

Another introduction comes from a morning meditation up in Wisconsin this past Spring, in the midst of a consultation on alcohol and campus life.

The earth is, as I have taught you, a most special realm, and one of the many reasons for this is beverage alcohol. As you say in your presentation I, in creation, set the mechanism for the "production" of alcohol, a definite by-product of natural plants and water, My most plentiful resource. I knew, in a general sense, what this substance would do to and for people. This even is related to the Garden of Eden story, for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had the capacity to let humans think... and challenge Me and My ways and purposes. That fruit, fermented in water, brought forth the capacity to exhibit spirit... and hence the person can know more about his own spirit, and others, also, have views from which to make judgments. (from "Spirit as a Factor in Drinking," April 15, 1982)

I have believed that this earth is "a most special realm", and these Teachings have verified that repeatedly. (The previous Ruminations centered on the earth as a special place for which we have stewardship responsibilities and opportunities, remember?) In the presentation referred to I tell the first story of creation in Genesis, noting that on the third day God made bodies of water... and then plants, with fruits and grains... and also, presumably, the microscopic plant called yeast. On the sixth day God created man, male and female He created them, and, however long those days were, some of that fruit or some of that grain certainly had fallen into some puddle and been affected by some of that yeast... and humans found alcohol already brewing. The Spirit carries that on further, proposing that the fruit from the "tree in the midst of the Garden" could also ferment and allow the exhibition of spirit.

I know I risk prolonging this introduction, but there are a couple of paragraphs from the last one on this theme, this past summer, that have some intriguing wording...

As you indicate, accurately, in the presentation you do, alcohol developed as a natural part of the natural world I created. It was not a direct creation, like a fig tree or a cockroach, and it isn't as vital as, say, the water cycle of the seasons, but it was an indirect creation of which I was aware. I am not surprised that many humans have come to use it, even regularly, but I am saddened when the harm that comes from its misuse seems greater than the good that it brings to human life.

Male and female I created them. Yes, sexual differences were My direct creation, for procreation and for pleasure. Likewise I am saddened when the damage that these sex differences cause or allow seems to outweigh the many positives.

And, as you would expect, I am not happy with some of what happens when alcohol is a factor in sexual relations. Know, however that both this substance and

this nature of persons are part of the earth plane and therefore part of the potential for spiritual growth or regression. There is a very little risk in eating and digesting lettuce or in playing tennis with a member of the opposite sex. Therefore there is little potential for spiritual growth from such actions. (from “Alcohol and Sexuality,” July 6, 1982)

So, the suggestion is that out of dealings with this creation, alcohol, which can range from blessing to curse, can come spiritual growth. And, the growth potential comes from this possibility for harm... and the Lord is quite aware of all of this. It's a kind of test...

As I have said before, drinking, in itself, is not a harmful practice. I do bless your brew, and I hear your prayer that it may cause no harm to anyone and that it be to the joy of human hearts. But alcohol is one of My tests of man and woman. It is a test of responsibility. It is a test of integrity as a person. It is a test of one's inner, spiritual self. What emerges as alcohol works its way into the total being? It is not a test to show Me, of course, but to show you.

You are not being graded. Your place with Me is not lost as a result of tests. But if you do truly cherish My presence in you then you must... you will... look at the test results and makes changes if the results hang heavy upon your heart. (from “Drinking,” September 22, 1979)

Yes, it does say here that alcohol is one of the Spirit's “tests”... of responsibility, of integrity, and of one's inner spiritual self. And, He says, it is a “self-test”... to let you or me know how each of us “is doing,” spiritually. The test is not necessary for God. He knows clearly how each of us is progressing. But as I see and evaluate the results of my own tests and find that my behavior is objectionable in some important ways I should be nudged into making some changes. What changes? The obvious and historical one is to quit drinking. This may prevent some behaviors that come only with drinking... but the Spirit goes on to say...

Alcohol is not the evil doer. It is the revealer of inner self. The need is not to give up drinking. That would be like unto refusing to take tests because you don't do well. Your efforts should be toward the root of the problem – the need for a stronger, more aware, more appreciative inner self. (from “Drinking,” Sept 22, 1979)

So, the case is being built that alcohol is a “revealer of inner self.” Not drinking prevents that revelation, but this is akin to a student saying, “Sorry, but I won't take any of your tests because I'm not likely to do well on them.” The more acceptable actions seems to be to improve the knowledge and skill that are being tested... in this case it involves the development of spirit. The next paragraph of explication is not as precise and direct as we might wish, but I include it here, to complete the idea.

Yes, My son, the rhythm concepts apply here. You must be more aware of yourself and others... more aware of how drink affects these relations. Beyond awareness comes appreciation... appreciation of the flow of life experiences and of when the flow is an unproductive, unhappy one. This is a high criterion for health. If you are functioning well you will do this in most of life's situations. As you build

this capacity, this habit, this way of living, it will prevail when tested by alcohol. The test will come out better because your life performance will be better. This is the real issue. (from “Drinking,” September 22, 1979)

(I don’t want to stop the flow of this thought, but I also don’t want to miss commenting on the reference to “your brew”... mine. As many of you know I regularly make a home-brewed beverage... and have done so since 1958, when I learned how from a professional colleague, Gib Shimmel. About seven years ago I began saying a blessing and prayer as I stirred in the yeast, setting the brewing process in motion, so to speak. The quote on the previous page says that the blessing is given, as requested, and that the prayer is heard... “that it be to the joy of human hearts.” An earlier Teaching contained this parallel approval.

I thought it good that you make your own brew, and My heart was pleased when you began to bless and consecrate what you make. Truly, I can make of that liquid a blessing, and usually I do. Just assume that I do all the time. It shouldn’t matter to you. You have prayed, you have thanked, you have requested. Leave the results to me! (from “Alcohol,” July 2, 1979)

I see this as the important “formula” for prayer of any kind... say your prayer, offer your thanks, make your request, and leave the results to God, with the faith that He will give what is best. (A digression, but a good one, I think.)

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Probably the most important insight that has come in these meditations about this substance alcohol is one concerning its relationship with mind and spirit. This idea has been offered a number of times and in different ways, but the one I like best came one morning in Portland, Oregon during the time I was conducting a week’s workshop on Alcohol Education at Portland State University. The Teaching was called “Alcohol and the Spirit” and was given the day I was to focus on drinking by young people.

Alcohol deserves to be called a “spirit” because I arranged for its creation in the earth... and it does reveal the spirit of the person who consumes. Alcohol diminishes the functioning of the mind... and also reduces its dominance. This means that the rational mind has less control, BUT the control is not just lost... it becomes that of spirit. (from “Alcohol and the Spirit,” June 24, 1981)

That was very interesting to me, for I have known and taught for years that a major effect of alcohol is on the frontal lobes of the cerebrum, reducing memory, judgment, inhibitions, and reasoning. I sort of assumed, then, that this left no control; I hadn’t considered that the control would now be of a different sort... spirit. Consider the example that follows:

When there are no obvious, marked changes in demeanor as alcohol is consumed it signifies that the spirit and the mind are in good relationship, but, generally, that the spirit is not particularly well developed. This may seem strange, but consider what happens, after some drinking, when the spirit is highly developed... and the

mind is also strong in its functioning. (From “Alcohol and the Spirit,” June 24, 1981)

(It seems easier, evidently, to exemplify the difference in one with a strong spirit. Stay with the positive!)

As the dominance of the mind recedes, the concern for self and for what is rational and logical to do diminishes. The spirit thus becomes more evident...in concern for others, in generosity, in thoughtfulness, and in uninhibited praise or thanks to and for others. The desire to meet and know other people is unleashed and friendliness becomes obvious. Others, who are more sober, may react in like fashion, if their spirits are strong... or may be “put off” by this “drunken behavior”... all of which is evidence of the dominance of rational mind over spirit. Sometimes, then, the drunken one can show more positive spirit than the sober one... which should be a “sobering” – or an enlivening – thought. (from “Alcohol and the Spirit,” June 24, 1981)

The mind’s major concern is for self... preservation and betterment. In a sense this is “selfish,” but in another it is just rational and logical... “using your head.” If I am with a group of people I don’t know, my mind can caution me about speaking beyond generalities... sort of a “what will they think of me” caution. But, aha, the spirit is that which says, “Go ahead, take a chance, find out.” The stronger the spirit the more it urges these concerns for others. And, you see, if the influence of the mind is diminished, by alcohol in this case, these spiritually motivated behaviors become evident. A person may be more generous than she should be, more friendly than usual, more willing to do things for others, even if it isn’t wise to do. Those of developed spirit are also more able to accept from others, so it can follow that the intoxicated person with a developed spirit may be much more willing to let someone else drive him home, rather than insisting on his own superiority. Interesting thought?

He goes on to say that this show of spirit can bring forth comparably other-oriented behaviors in the sober ones. On the other hand when a sober soul rejects a fellow human because of “drunken behavior” this may be showing the dominance of mind... and perhaps the weakness of spirit.

Those who make the best abstainers are those in whom spirit is naturally so strong and developed that it coordinates and facilitates the total self and can easily and readily come to the fore and meet the spirits of others, those sober and those less so. (You can see that “sobriety” is a term developed by the mind; its implication is one of quiet and reserve rather than one of outgoingness and joy. We need to work on that.) (from “Alcohol and the Spirit,” June 24, 1981)

A good friend of mine, a life-long abstainer, fits this description perfectly. His sobriety is of a bubbling sort, and he seems to have no need to reduce the dominance of his mind. His spirit has been sorely tested in this life, but he continues to have an enthusiasm for the present and the future, and an optimism about the folks he associates with. He had wondered if there ever would be a time when he would take a drink. One came recently. As he describes it, the situation, in a foreign culture, was one of great friendliness, and he knew that his refusal to drink the toast would have been interpreted as the rejection of a proffered gift. He had to decide quickly. He opted for the spirit of friendship.

And what can we do about that term “sobriety”?

Okay, at the risk of redundance, I’ll let the Spirit summarize this major point.

The fundamental dimension of being is spirit. It is that which ties the continuity of life and lives together in the individual, that which relates most intimately to and with others, and it is the unifying, coordinating dimension within the person. When alcohol exerts its effects, spirit is involved.

Now I have told you before that alcohol’s major effects are on the mind and body... the adverse effects. The mind slows in function, memory is less accurate, and judgments are less predictable. Physical coordinations deteriorate, and the senses are dulled and diminished. But as the power and influence of the mind is ebbing, and inhibitions, which are learned, are also waning, spirit is showing forth. So, true, how a person “is” in a drunken state is an evidence of spirit. This concept should be part of alcohol education. (from “Alcohol Education,” April 14, 1982)

My earlier example of my abstaining friend could also have been one of the symbolic quality of the fermented beverage. Can that take us to the marriage at Cana, as described in the Gospel of John. You bet it can!

You know surely, o son, that I like symbols. Alcohol, in its various or special beverages, can be and is a strong symbol of friendship and comraderie. There can be other symbols, of course, but this does not deny that alcohol is one... and a good one. Just as the cross, the Bible, and the opening chords of a hymn are symbols leading one to worship and to fellowship with Me, so the glass of beer can be the symbol of “now is the time for fellowship.”

At the wedding feast at Cana, I, as Jesus, changed large jars of water into large jars of wine. Perhaps this was a contribution to drunkenness, but it was, more importantly, a contribution to celebration. Water, precious though it is, would not have been a symbol of continued celebration. It would have symbolically announced, “The celebration is over.” And it was not the time for that. (from “Alcohol and Positive Health,” July 18, 1980)

Those who are prone to focus on the damage associated with alcohol in our culture do not like this idea of the brewed, fermented, and distilled drinks being symbols of friendship and comraderie. Commercials from Miller’s, Lowenbrau, and Pabst Blue Ribbon emphasize this, and it is tempting to the young to come be a part of such human fun. But there is a reality reflected in these advertisements.

Now if we take the Biblical account and apply it to modern life, what happens? A commercial based on the Marriage at Cana story could well be roundly criticized for encouraging excessive drinking. The story says that Jesus changed the reality of water to that of wine, in six stone jars, each holding 20 to 30 gallons, which would mean 120 to 180 gallons of wine... quite a few 4 ounce cups... and the celebration already had consumed the original, presumably ample, supply!

But He still says, “It was not the time for ‘the celebration is over.’” A later Teaching referred to this again in symbolic terms...

The story of the marriage at Cana tells of Me, as Jesus, providing wine for the continuation of the marriage celebration in a rather miraculous and excessive way. Large jars were filled with water and yet those who dipped from them perceived the drink as wine. Why did I do that? Fundamentally, all miracles are simply a display of the power of God to change a situation, usually from something undesirable to something desirable. This was such, though it was rather quiet and unobtrusive. Only a few appreciated that I had done a miraculous act, in the name and power of the Father God.

It was a generous act, symbolizing Our willingness to provide amply for the needs of people... yes, even wants. In a strict sense the people there did not need more wine. They certainly didn't need all of those jars full of wine. Yet I provided beyond their needs and wants. That was an important symbol, and its truth remains to this day.

I provided it that the celebration might continue. Marriage is a fine, important institution, and it is proper to celebrate the occasion of a marriage. Wine can be a symbol for many things... in this case it was the symbol of celebration. I approved of the celebration. The symbol was spent. I was asked, in an indirect way, to provide more. And I did. It was plentiful and it was of recognizable high quality. The celebration continued. And, as I said, a few knew that the power of God had been manifested in that place. (from “Jars of Wine,” September 18, 1981)

To keep a proper balance I need to include some of the things said about drunkenness and alcoholism, but, first, two more potential contributions to positive health.

Another effect, that you have experienced, is a greater attunement to beauty – in nature, in music, in others. When one of the effects of sobriety is a feeling that there just is not enough time to appreciate flowers, trees, and landscapes... the chords and nuances of beautiful music... the unique splendor of relationships, observed or enacted... it is a positive contribution to have that time consciousness dulled. Then the beauty consciousness surfaces. It may not be as acute as it could be without alcohol, but it is manifested... and it would not have been otherwise... it is a contribution to the positive. (from “Alcohol and Positive Health,” July 18, 1980)

and... this one starts negatively, but ends building spirit.

Alcohol often allows certain words and ideas to be expressed that would be otherwise inhibited and unsaid. This usually is seen in a negative light, the words being ugly and destructive. Such it is when the spirit revealed is undeveloped or poorly developed. The angry and the hating spirits can be tragic to behold and experience. But look to the positive. Some loving words, some helpful ideas may be held back and never expressed. As inhibitions diminish they can come forth, and

relationships can be nurtured. This is both a manifestation of spirit and a building of spirit. (from "Alcohol and Positive Health," July 18, 1980)

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Lest anyone think that the Spirit is disparaging the mind in the statements quoted earlier, let this be said:

In drunkenness you lose control of self, for the rational mind is most affected and the influence of the rational mind is an important part of good life rhythm. True, the spirit is not diminished... only revealed... but though this is interesting as a revelation it is not a desirable state to be in repeatedly. (from "Drunkenness," November 8, 1981)

So there is the implication that while there can be some values in drinking, these diminish with drunkenness... particularly when this is repeated. This repetitive pattern often merits the diagnosis Alcoholism, and there was one entire teaching with this title more than two years ago. It began:

This that We talk about today is that major negative effect of alcohol on people – the addiction, so that spirit is revealed repeatedly and the negative returns accumulate. You hear Me say again (and you may soon believe it!) that there is a strong spiritual component to the illness of alcoholism. In its manifestations it is not just a physical/mental condition. Intoxication with alcohol brings about a revealing of the spirit that can be frightening. Consider some of these revelations.

(I'll abstract what follows, but the words are still those of the Spirit.)

... the showing of an angry spirit... a deeper condition than the emotion of anger... the display of violence. Some may be verbal... loudness, vituperation, profanity, ridicule, sarcasm... the target may be one other person, certain others, particular groups, or all people, including those present. Another form of anger is that against other forms of life, against machines, or other parts of the physical world... (or) anger against people that is transplanted into destructiveness of things... the "worst" behavior is actual hurt upon or actual destruction of another person or persons.

(There also) is anger toward self, wherein alcohol allows the anger to be felt and expressed against self, and the mind is relatively powerless to defend the self... and the love of self is, also, too minimal.

The angry alcoholic can be a most fearsome human being. The behaviors often make compassion difficult to show. The worlds of many rumble and quake because the presence of that angry spirit revealed repeatedly in alcoholism.

Another manifestation is the disparaging... even the hating... spirit. There may not be the outward display, as in anger (though there may be, particularly if there is some of each). Most often there is a disengagement from others, with snide,

disparaging tongue, and retreat to within self... or away from others. If there is little hatred of self, the retreat may be merely a withdrawal. Yet if there is also disparagement and hatred of self there is great incentive to drink, often quietly, to the extinction of consciousness. (from "Alcoholism," June 2, 1980)

These are descriptions of behavior, certainly, ones familiar to those who live with or seek to help those who have this addiction. But here it is described as a condition of spirit, one worse than just a display of emotions. And, important to remember, this is not a description of all alcoholics, but, rather, those with poorly developed spirits. Consider another explanation...

A few words about nasty drunkenness, even though this may be obvious. First, the less developed or undeveloped spirit shows forth as just self-centeredness... mild jibes at others and behavior that tends to benefit self. However, as spirits have developed, but in concert with evil spirits rather than with positive spirits or with My Spirit, the result is often violence against others, against things and the earth, or against self. The raging, destructive drunk shows forth a negatively developed spirit that the mind may overcome when alcohol is not present.

Not drinking allows the mind to have its dominance, but the retarded spirit is still there. Treatment must thus have a large component of spiritual development of the positive sort... of opening self to others, even to Me... of serving others and considering others more than self. (from "Alcohol and the Spirit," June 24, 1981)

The negatively developed spirit can be overcome by the mind during sobriety, but the real task is to develop the spirit more positively, not just prevent its display. So the basic spiritual principles for treatment are offered, and how like those of Alcoholics Anonymous they are! Being an active part of a regular fellowship is important, where people have concern for one another and where God is referred to often and comfortably. The fundamental behavior for maintaining sobriety in AA is Twelfth Step work, helping others to stay sober, even when it is inconvenient and downright annoying.

This also applies to other more professionally-oriented therapy and to those who make this their life work. They can aid in spiritual growth, but can also grow themselves, for...

Drunkenness is a state of helplessness. It has few merits, but one of these is that it provides a reason for others to help... and helping others is a basic spiritual exercise. (from "Drunkenness," November 8, 1981)

Though I have been associated with this alcohol field for these years, this counseling role is not mine to fill most of the time. (And the Spirit has made clear that I am in "right place" as an educator, which is nice to know.) Still, from time to time I have an opportunity forced upon me to help someone suffering from this disease. Two years ago I had such a chance, and a Teaching, in conjunction, advised me thusly:

The basic technique will be that of telling stories... and he is better at that than you are. Don't "lay anything on him." Just tell what has happened to you. Listen to him, and know that he has as much to teach you as you have to teach him. I often can use suffering people to teach important lessons to those who would, from

strength, help them. I value weakness as I do strength. I had times of weakness as Jesus. Yet My Spirit grew and My disciples and other profited from these times. (from "Russ' Dilemma," July 2, 1980)

I don't know if I helped him any, but I certainly did acquire some valuable perceptions during our times together.

Weakness. How should I deal with this in relation to self and alcohol? People in this field are supposed to be either those who have admitted their weakness and are recovering from the symptoms of this disease or those who are strong and intelligent enough to avoid drunkenness and problems therefrom. I have done fairly well with this latter, but the Teaching "Drunkenness", from which I quoted on the previous page, was written the morning after a surprising experience with intoxication in me. Two paragraphs of this give me important information and also admonish, but with a characteristic compassion and gentleness.

Drunkenness in a person of your age and position and spiritual accomplishment often is a sign of a change in body tolerance. There is nothing shameful about this. It would only be shameful if you failed to recognize it or to do something about it when it is acknowledged. Physical bodies have their weaknesses, but the proper application of mind and spirit can turn any weakness into a valuable means, even before the weakness brings some harm.

Be reasonable. Do not give up what is not necessary, but be honest in assessing yourself. Seek a remedy that deals with the difficulty and then apply it with the intemperance which is part of your nature. (from "Drunkenness," Nov. 8, 1981)

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The time to close is at hand. I have several, beautiful and unique ways to do this. Perhaps I shall use them all, somehow. One of Paul's strong messages in Romans, particularly in Ch. 14, is that it is not the behavior God considers and values, but the underlying spirit and intention. The Spirit speaks in this vein, also...

Spirit is a factor in drinking, and Paul offers the fundamental truth in the Holy Scriptures. If you do not drink, refrain for Me. If you do drink, do so for Me. And even if you overdrink, still offer this to Me. I love abstainers whose motivations are to serve Me better, to be no stumbling block for their fellow humans, to live life more fully in other ways. I love those who drink responsibly, again with a concern for the welfare of others... and with a spirit that recognizes this beverage as one of My good gifts. I also love the drunk whose love for and relationship to Me is quite in evidence as the influence of mind diminishes...

So spirit is a factor in drinking... first in the motivations to drink, abstain, or overdrink... and then as that which is revealed to self and others as the drinking proceeds. In vino veritas est... and I am responsible for this. (from "Spirit as a Factor in Drinking," April 15, 1982)

This, above, was from a rather recent meditation. Yet I also like the closing of the first one of these I received, over three years ago.

You can well ask, “Why, then, is there this sorrow and pain associated with the misuse of alcohol? “Can’t You, the Lord God, prevent this?” The answer is, “Of course”, but you and your earthly neighbors must grow. And without challenge and risk there is no growth. Further, everyone needs to show concern and compassion, and this can only be seen manifested toward those who suffer. Yes, I could do it another way... just as I could have led My people, Israel, out of Egypt without the destruction of young boys and strong, fine, young soldiers.

They remember, many of them, the greatness that is I as they tell of what I did with them. And, so, many people, this very night, are attesting to their relationship with Me, derived from the suffering that alcohol brought to them.

Alcohol is part of the life rhythm, and is, at the same time, a rhythm of its own. No one is ever lost to Me because of liquor. They shall return again to help others who suffer.

It is of inherent worth, but it, like Cain, can turn and be a slayer. You, o son, shall brush this destruction from time to time, but shall prevail... because I have tasks for you to do. You May Not Do but that I have you do.

So drink with a merry heart and be My faithful one. The day is done. And it was a good one. The Lord shall bless you and keep you. (from “Alcohol,” July 2, 1979)

He “could do it another way,” but sees the value in this way. I end most of my musical presentations on this issue with a poem that I got from Father Joe Martin, which commences, “I do not wish you joy without a sorrow...” One teaching, a fascinating analysis of the songs I use, concluded, speaking to this verse...

“Spirits” remain both destructive and upbuilding. It has ever been so and shall ever be. To avoid the harm we would have to lose the enhancement. There must be both joy and sorrow... sunshine and shade. Faith, strength, love, wisdom... emphasize these... and the greatest of these is love. Do this with love from your spirit, and I shall be pleased. (from “The Spirit and ‘Spirits’,” June 6, 1980)

Finally, the concluding paragraph I find most intriguing as I finish this.

Yes, for everything there is a season. There is a time for intoxication and an exercising of spirit. There is a time to laugh and a time to dance, and a time to love. These times can certainly be realized without alcohol... and are... There can be wonderful, meaningful worship without an organ (and many have no such need), but for some the organ adds. There can be worship without a sanctuary, but for some it adds.

Alcohol is not necessary to positive health, but it can be an interesting, useful addition. Ponder and apply. Seek to know more... and then ponder. Amen (from "Alcohol and Positive Health," July 18, 1980)

There is much to ponder here. Let me know if you have some "ponderings" to share.

Until soon.

Shalom

Bob Russell

Christian, Professor, Health Educator, Writer, Song-Singer,
Farmer, Philosopher, Peasant, Brewer, Servant