**“BAR CHURCH” – Liberalism Waxes Worse & Worse!**

*by Harry Osborne*

In the 1950’s, more liberally-minded brethren adopted the mantra: "We do many things for which we have no Bible authority." Faithful brethren warned of the far-reaching consequences to renouncing the biblical mandate for Bible authority of every teaching and practice (Colossians 3:17).

Initially, those denying the need for Bible authority in all things merely sought church treasures to fund their institutions for the care of "orphans," despite the Bible clearly putting the care for orphans as an individual responsibility (James 1:26-27), best met in the God-designed home of Genesis 2. The next thing to be introduced was the funding of colleges from church treasuries. After that, a series of innovations of man were added as a part of the work of local churches and funded from their treasuries – kitchens, daycare, pre-schools, gymnasiums, ball fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, family life centers, auto mechanic classes, movie nights, Six Flags retreats, dance classes and the list goes on. Yes, institutional churches have provided for and/or funded every one of them.

As the innovations of institutional churches have gone from bad to worse, I have often wondered, "What will they do next?" Well, their latest effort was beyond my ability to imagine – you just can’t make up something like this one! The following is an unedited quote from the website of the "Southern Hills Church of Christ" in Abilene, Texas (www.sohillschurch.org/get-connected/events/bar-church/):

BAR CHURCH

Southern Hills is a church committed to the vision of being God's Community Front Porch: Inviting, Including and Involving people in the life of Jesus.  As we've grown into this vision, God has repeatedly led us to follow Jesus outside the walls of our church building to serve and share life with people - many of whom are not connected to God or a church family.

Recently, God led a group of Southern Hills members to make plans for something we're calling Bar Church.  The mission of Bar Church is to take the gospel of Jesus to people who are unwilling, as a result of feelings of unworthiness or prior negative experiences with a church, to participate in a traditional church gathering within a traditional church setting.  We believe it's something Jesus might do.

What passage gives them the idea that Jesus would open a bar? The Jesus who came in the flesh was the same eternal God, the "Word," who inspired Old Testament scripture (John 1:1; 1 Peter 1:10-11, etc.). The Old Testament scripture has somewhat to say about intoxicants and its teachings clearly do **not** encourage setting up a bar to provide for intoxicants.

*Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things* (Proverbs 23:31-33).

*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise* (Proverbs 20:1).

What part of those verses would suggest Jesus might set up a bar to serve intoxicants? Lest anyone think that I have jumped to a wrong conclusion and that "Bar Church" intends only to serve non-intoxicants, here is an unedited quote from their "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)" section of their website (www.sohillschurch.org/get-connected/events/bar-church/bar-church-faqs/):

**Will alcohol be served?**

Yes. Bar Church meets in a bar, so alcohol will be present and available beginning at noon on Sundays. With Bar Church’s stated mission to meet people where they are, we anticipate that alcohol most likely will be consumed sometime during the meeting of Bar Church.

Several years ago, I saw a statement from one suggesting that Jesus was the "bartender" at the wedding party of John 2. Maybe the Southern Hills eldership listened to such claims as the basis for their "Bar Church" idea. However, there is nothing to suggest that the "wine" Jesus made was an intoxicant and every bit of evidence strongly argues to the contrary. Please note from John 2:6 that the amount of "wine" Jesus made was "six waterpots… containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece." Do the math. That is a total volume of 120-180 gallons. John 2:10 says that the guests had already "well drunk" before this "wine" came out. If this had all been "wine" by modern terms, Jesus would have helped these people to drunkenness, a state clearly condemned by the gospel of Christ (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:10). Even a little thought quickly leads us to see that we must be missing something in our terminology as compared with the way the Bible uses the word "wine."

In this passage and others, the word translated "wine" (***oinos***) may refer to either fermented wine (Ephesians 5:18) or unfermented grape juice (Revelation 19:13-15). Thus, we cannot assume the word "wine" means an intoxicant in the New Testament just because our word "wine" means such today.

Another fact to be considered is the way in which the New Testament world used the word "wine" to refer to the mixture of wine (whether fermented or unfermented) with water. When one referred to "wine" in that time, he meant **water mixed with wine**. To refer to straight wine, it was necessary to add the words "uncut," "unmixed" or "unmingled." Further, it was considered a barbaric action to drink uncut wine. The mixtures of water to wine varied from 20 parts water to 1 of wine (given by Homer as ideal) to 3 parts water to 1 of wine (given in the Talmud for the Passover cups). The standard mixture was from 4 - 6 parts water to 1 part wine. Remember, this was the mixture whether it was fermented or not (Everett Ferguson, Restoration Quarterly, 1970, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 141-153).

Now, let us assume for a moment that the "uncut wine" was fermented before mixing. Let us further assume that it was fermented to the maximum possible without enhancing – about 6-8% given the grapes of that time. If one cut that mixture at a rate of 4 to 1, that would result in a drink of 2% alcohol at the very most. That was enough to kill impurities in the water in Bible times, but far below anything served in a bar! The bar drinks of today have not the faintest resemblance to what happened in New Testament times – even with the most liberal interpretation of possible events (See R.H. Stein, Christianity Today, 20 June 1975, pp. 9-11).

Modern alcoholic drinks would be condemned automatically by Bible standards. In the first place, most of them are made from something other than the juice of the grape – a practice without any justification in all of the scripture. Second, their alcoholic content has been enhanced. Today’s wines commonly range from 14 to 18% in alcohol by volume! Third, the drinks are not cut after the fashion of “wine” in New Testament time. The only drinks that are commonly cut are the cocktails which still contain 20 - 25% alcohol by volume after cutting! No, the practice of Southern Hill’s "Bar Church" is not of God, but is condemned as "strong drink" (See J. Free, Archaeology & Bible History, 351-365).

The invitation to "Bar Church" clearly shows their agenda (www.barchurchabilene.com/):

A lot of people seem to be interested in Jesus but are turned off by religion or just the idea of walking into an institutional church.  We get that.  At Bar Church, we're interested in creating a place where any person - regardless of their background, accomplishments, failures or issues - can come experience friendship, acceptance, and the grace that comes through Jesus.

We invite you to join us when you're ready.  We meet at 11:30 a.m. every Sunday at Memories Bar, 541 China St. in Abilene, TX.  Come as you are.

 The mega-churches have attracted the masses with the "come as you are" plea to be "inclusive" of everyone, despite their continued practice of sin. It is a *no-cost religion* of human origin. True Christianity demands that one be transformed from previous ways to be remade by God’s will, giving up all sin in order to fully serve the Lord (Romans 12:1-2). The same inspired writer earlier, answering the question of whether we could continue in sin that grace might abound, said emphatically, "***God forbid!***" (Romans 6:1-2). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). If anyone is in Southern Hill’s "Bar Church," he may come as he is, drink in hand at the bar. The contrast is clear! Yes, our liberally-minded brethren have kept their word – "We do many things for which we have no Bible authority."