



# Intoxicants in Community of Christ: A Historical Overview

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# Responsible Choices

## Enduring Principles

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# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Joseph Smith, Jr. on Intemperance
  - I was informed today that a man by the name of Clark, who was under the influence of ardent spirits froze to death last night, near this place. How long, O Lord, will this monster intemperance find its victims on the earth?
    - 12 March 1836

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Context
  - By the early 1820s, Americans drank more than anyone else in the world with the average person consuming 7.5 gallons of distilled spirits a year.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Context

- Christian's began embracing temperance as a moral cause by the late 1820s. The American Temperance Society was created in 1826 and the number of state and local auxiliaries exploded, growing to 5,000 organizations with 1,250,000 members by 1833.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **Temperance (Webster's 1828 Edition)**
  - **TEM'PERANCE**, *noun* [Latin temperantia, from tempero.]
    - 1. Moderation; particularly, habitual moderation in regard to the indulgence of the natural appetites and passions; restrained or moderate indulgence; as *temperance* in eating and drinking; *temperance* in the indulgence of joy or mirth. *temperance* in eating and drinking is opposed to gluttony and drunkenness, and in other indulgences, to excess.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Context
  - The northeastern corner of Ohio, where Kirtland is located, was a hotbed of temperance activity. Kirtland's temperance society formed in 1830.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- The primary focus on their attention was a log distillery on the Kirtland Flats
- From Christopher Crary's *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences*
  - Established about 1819 by Warren Corning
  - Turned corn into an easily transportable commodity
  - Also generated yeast for baking since baking soda was not available



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- The constitution, by-laws and signatures of the Kirtland Temperance Society
  - 239 signatures
  - First meeting – 6 October 1830
  - Voted, that no member of this society dispose of grain of any kind to a distiller of whisky. Voted, that the executive committee be and they are hereby directed to enquire into the situation and circumstances of the distillery in this place, and whether some equally profitable and more laudable use may not be made of it.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Meanwhile, back in Harmony, PA in Aug/Sept of 1830
  - 26:1b (LDS 27) For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory;

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Meanwhile, back in Harmony, PA in Aug/Sept of 1830
  - 26:1d (LDS 27) wherefore a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine, neither strong drink of your enemies; wherefore ye shall partake of none, except it is made new among you; yea, in this my Father's kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Back to Kirtland
  - “In 1833 the distillery and fixtures were to be sold, the owner William Carrel, having died. The concern because such a nuisance that the temperance people clubbed together -- ten or twelve of them -- Judge Allen, of Willoughby, bidding it off to them ...”
  - “This vote culminated in the purchase of the still by members of the society, under agreement that it should never again be used as a distillery.”

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Within a month of the Temperance Society's closing of the distillery, Joseph Smith Jr. brought the "Word of Wisdom" to the church.
  - "A Revelation for the benefit of the saints &c a word of wisdom for the benefit of the . . . Church and also the saints in Zion to be sent Greeting not by commandment or constraint but by revelation and the word of wisdom . . . given for a principle with promise adapted to the capacity [sic] of the weak and the weakest of all saints who are or can be called saints."

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89) Feb 1833
  - 86:1b that inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold, it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together, to offer up your sacraments before him.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89)
  - 86:1c And behold, this should be wine; yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89) Feb 1833
  - **Strong Drink** = distilled (vs. fermented)
  - Strong drink “is not good” and “is not for the belly” but is rather “for the washing of your bodies.” Cinnamon whiskey was used in Kirtland by 1836 for the ritual washings associated with preparation for spiritual empowerment.
  - There seems to have consistently been an exception to the prohibition on strong drink for medicinal use



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89) Feb 1833
  - **Wine**
  - Wine is only to be drunk “in assembling yourselves together, to offer up your sacraments before him” and should be “pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make.”

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89) Feb 1833
  - **Wine**
    - Temple Dedication
    - “Pure wine”
    - Water?
    - New wine?
    - Weddings?

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89)
  - 86:3a All grain is good for the food of man, as also the fruit of the vine, that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground.
  - 86:3b Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls, and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals and for mild drinks and also other grain.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Word of Wisdom - D&C 86 (LDS 89)
  - **Mild Barley Drinks = Beer**
    - Understood to be good
    - “All grain is good for the food of man . . . and barley . . . for mild drinks and also other grain.”

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Emma Smith to Joseph Smith III, 2 December 1867
  - I think we had some of the largest clusters and the largest berries [sic] on them that I ever saw, and we used them freely. We eat [sic] all we wanted and made pies by the section, canned [sic] a few made some jelly, put up a box to be opened when you come from Conference, put up another box to keep till Alex come [sic] home

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- sold one or two hundred and then made over three hundred gallons of wine and a cask of vinegar. Pa Bidamon would not have made any wine if he could have sold the grapes as he did last year but he could only get from five to seven cents a pound

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **GCR No. 92 Adopted April 9, 1868**
  - That this conference deprecates [disapproves of] the use of intoxicating drinks (as beverages), and the use of tobacco, and recommends to all officers of the church, total abstinence.

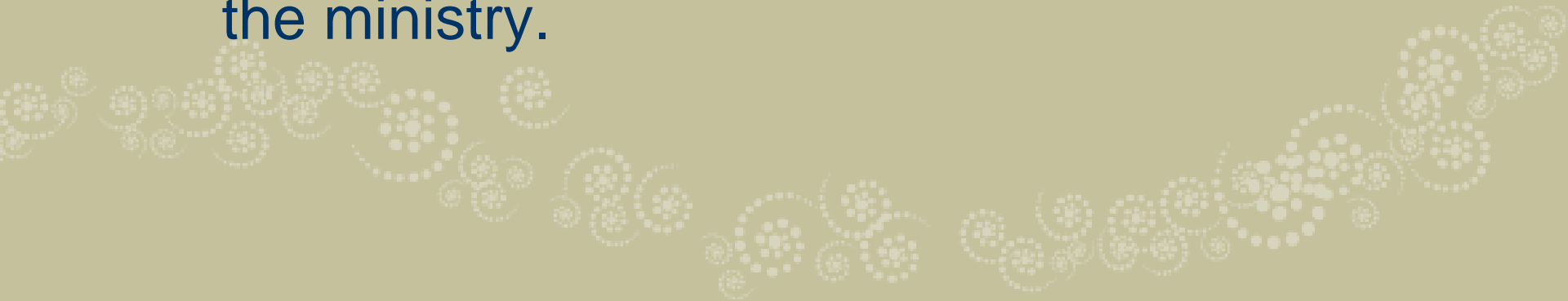
# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Joseph Smith III, Elder Gurley, and Colonel Allen Campbell, circa 1881
  - “I had always exercised my right of personal liberty by refraining from drinking at a bar or in a saloon. I do not know that Elder Gurley drank with the Colonel, but when they returned he seemed to smile and twinkle as though he had tasted something good and was feeling the touch of “good fellowship” which attended. I found no fault with the Colonel or with Brother Gurley.”



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **GCR No. 235 Adopted April 13, 1881.**
  - No. 235. That this conference discourage the use of tobacco, and of strong drinks, as a beverage, by the church, and especially by the ministry.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **297. Drinking Intoxicants (Adopted April 9, 1885)**
  - Inasmuch as some of the members of this church are in the habit of visiting saloons and drinking intoxicants, which habit seems to hinder the spread of the work, therefore be it Resolved, That . . . it be made a test of fellowship for any member of this church who will persist in this practice. (Presented by the Third Quorum of Elders.)

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- Kirtland, OH – April 11, 1887
  - 119:3d Avoid the use of tobacco and be not addicted to strong drink in any form, that your counsel to be temperate may be made effectual by your example.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- GCR 329 Adopted April 11, 1888.
  - No. 329. 1. Whereas, The Lord has spoken against the use of tobacco and strong drink on different occasions; and whereas, In all our appointments we ought to show respect unto said counsel. Therefore, resolved, That henceforth we recommend no man for General Conference appointment whom we know to be addicted to either of the above evils, and that this decision take effect one year from date.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **463. Appointee Standards (Adopted April 16, 1898)**
  - Whereas, The Lord has spoken against the use of tobacco and strong drink on different occasions; and Whereas, In all our appointments we ought to show respect unto said counsel. Therefore Resolved, That henceforth we recommend no man for General Conference appointment whom we know to be addicted to either of the above evils.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **Joseph Smith III to Israel A. Smith, 31 March 1899**
  - Thursday, week ago yesterday, there were exercises at the College in the forenoon, which were very good, by the Athenians. When the train came in from St. Joseph, a keg of beer was dropped of[f], billed, it is said, to Rob Grenawalt. He asked W. B. Kelley to help him to carry it "up" and he would give him a glass of beer. So the two toted the beer; "up" meaning to |P2|p1 the old bakery and oven building formerly occupied by Billy Bradley.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **Joseph Smith III to Israel A. Smith, 31 March 1899**
  - Here, by wink, and nod, and whisper, some fourteen of the "boys" including Rob, W. B. Kelley, Otto Chem, Harry Nicholson, W. S. Blair, W. Gillen, Frank Henson, Joe Traxlar, "Ted" Sheen, Joe Danielson and others to the number of 14 gathered. By some means, Dewsnap & Bishop Kelley got wind of the gathering and they gathered too. The[y] caught some of the boys, and captured some beer, but the most hid in the garret and one or two in the oven. Well it raised a breeze in the old town. It has made "much talk."

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **Joseph Smith III to Israel A. Smith, 31 March 1899**
- It may not be such an awful crime to drink a glass of beer, now and then; but to obtain the stuff, and to gather in such a snooping way and in such company, is disgusting. I was glad you were not here, not that I think that you would have been in the proposed carousal; but I had the trouble of tracing down one charge of beer handling and guzzling made against you about two years or so ago, and I was glad there was no possibility of this your being "in it" in this one.



# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **Joseph Smith III to E.D.C. Smith (date unknown)**
  - “Control your temper, so far as possible; don't consort with saloon element, it is the poorest sort of humanity; but, don't waste your energies over a drink of beer taken in an unguarded time. There are worse things than that.”

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **702. Sacrament Wine (Adopted April 9, 1913)**
  - That fermented wine should not be used in the Sacrament services of the church, but that either unfermented wine or water should be used, and so be in harmony with the spirit of the revelations. (See D & C 26:1; 86:1; 119:5.)

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **D & C 152:4b W. Wallace Smith - 1976**
  - 152:4b Some have been led to inactivity, yea and even lulled to sleep by the spirit of carelessness and indifference. Some have been overcome by the grosser sins of the world--the spirit of revelry, wanton living, use of drugs, drinking, and fornication--and have fallen away.

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- **“Priesthood Standards and Qualifications” section of the Church Administrator’s Handbook: 2005 Edition, pg. 89.**
  - The church’s general policy regarding priesthood members drinking intoxicants is found in the question posed for consideration of priesthood calling: “Does the candidate exhibit good stewardship of health and hold high standards of behavior, avoiding the abuse of chemical substances and *refraining* from the use of alcohol and tobacco?”

# RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- However, *The Priesthood Manual: 2004 Edition* refers to “addiction to the use” of alcoholic beverages as grounds for not approving a priesthood call or removing priesthood authority.

# The Question Before Us

- **WCR 1300 Drinking of Intoxicants (Adopted April 15, 2013) (Rescinds WCR 297)**

- Whereas, GCR 297, which states, . . .

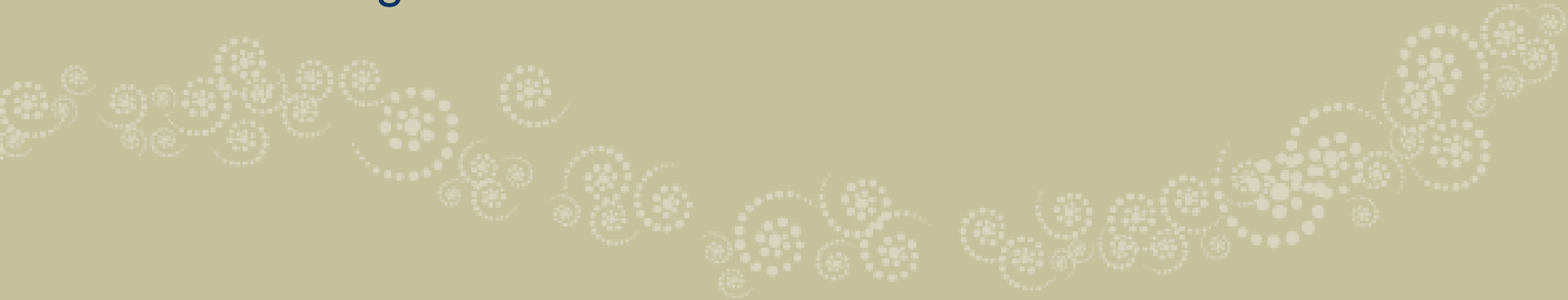
***Resolved***, That GCR 297 be rescinded; and be it further

***Resolved***, That the World Conference request the First Presidency give the church contemporary counsel regarding the interpretation of Section 152:4b, specifically regarding how the consumption of alcohol pertains to Community of Christ's understanding of sin; and be it further

***Resolved***, That this World Conference request the First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles review the policy requiring complete abstinence from alcohol consumption by members of the priesthood, and confirm and/or revise the policy and administrative guidelines so there is a clear understanding of expectations for priesthood on this issue throughout the church.

# The Resulting Policies

- POLICIES
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- For the well-being of individuals and the church community, especially the most vulnerable, disciples and priesthood members are urged to refrain from drinking intoxicants.
- If a priesthood member attempts to provide ministry or participate in a church activity while under the influence of intoxicants the presiding officer should remove the priesthood member from active ministry.
- Community of Christ does not allow consumption of intoxicants at Community of Christ-sponsored events or on Community of Christ owned properties.

# For Further Reading

- For a discussion of alcohol consumption in the U.S. during the 1820s & 1830s, see Susan Cheever, *Drinking in America: Our Secret History* (Grand Central Publishing, 2015).
- For a detailed discussion of both the Temperance movement and the development and implementation of the Word of Wisdom see Paul H. Peterson, “An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom.” M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972.
- See also “The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement” by Tom Alexander in *Dialogue 14:3 (1980)*
- See also “An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom” by Leonard Arrington, *BYU Studies*.