

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?

Acts 15:10

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To my wife, Heidi,
who by her abiding companionship
made my yoke easier and my burden lighter.

J.W.R.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A WORD OF INTENT ix

A WORD FROM FRANCIS SCHAEFFER xiii

CHAPTER 1

THESIS 1

 The NWC Argument 1

Part One: First Things 5

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RIGHT TO FREE INQUIRY 7

CHAPTER 3

THE RECOGNITION OF GOOD GIFTS 9

 The Recognition of NWC 10

Part Two: The Theses 13

CHAPTER 4

A YOKE OF TRADITION: A BRIEF REVIEW OF FUNDAMENTALIST HISTORY 15

 The Temperance Movement and the Birth of Fundamentalism ... 16

 The Infamous "Grape Juice Myth" 17

 A Brief Sketch of the Life and Moral Philosophy of William Bell Riley 19

CHAPTER 5

THE APPEAL TO SOCIAL ORDER 29

 The Appeal to Immature Students 30

 Lifestyles and Trends 31

 The Appeal to a NWC Reputation 32

CHAPTER 6

THE APPEAL TO THE WEAKER BROTHER 35

 The NWC Argument 35

 Scripture 36

CHAPTER 7

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS 41

 Psychological and Spiritual Reasons 41

 Sanctification and Self Denial 41

 Psychological Implications 42

 Hermenutical and Pseudo-Logical Reasons 43

Part Three: Resolutions 45

CHAPTER 8

CRITIQUE AND CONCLUSION 47

 Practical Steps for Change 47

 Consequences 48

WORKS CITED 51

A WORD OF INTENT

Out of love and zeal for truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following theses will be publicly discussed at Wittenburg under the chairmanship of the reverend father Martin Luttther,¹ Master of Arts and Sacred Theology and regularly appointed Lecturer on these subjects at that place. He requests that those who cannot be present to debate orally with us will do so by letter.

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

So reads the historic preamble of Martin Luther's revolutionary *Ninety-Five Theses* or *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. In Luther's day, the *disputatio* was a common method of sharpening minds and ideas within the Christian community. Luther's intent of the *Ninety-Five Theses* was to dispute certain popular teachings regarding indulgences and engage scholarly minds in a discussion of the true nature of this commonly accepted Roman Catholic doctrine. This disputation was the start down a path that revealed the many abuses of Mother Rome to Luther and those who followed him. Today, following their Roman forebear, some Protestant Christian organizations spiritually and psychologically mistreat their members (either by mistake or authoritarian intention) and present a false image of Christianity by their *heteropraxy*². This distortion is a reality we must not tolerate at Northwestern College.

¹ Luther's spelling.

² Wrong practice or literally other practice.

For the sake of clarity, I do not wish to be misunderstood as judgmental or labeled arrogantly rebellious because of the propositions made in this critique. I am not attempting to slander the school or vent a grudge.³ I am not calling for anarchy, but serious reform. I claim well meaning, discerning Christian motives with a desire to see NWC operate in *orthopraxy* as a Christ-reflective community. This critique is written as the voice of one within the circle of the NWC community who is hopeful of achieving unity and right thinking about this issue.

It is my intention to call attention to a flaw within our community structure which will be passed on to our successors if not intentionally dealt with. However, at the same time I wish to be clear in stating that by challenging the current social restrictions of NWC I am not striving for less responsibility in my, or anyone else's, spiritual life, but more. A true Christian spirituality goes far beyond establishing or abolishing a simple list of taboos. I write this critique with a desire for a deeper inner spiritual life that blossoms on the outside as a result of delighting in God's higher law of love on the inside. I hope to present a balanced view that avoids both the permissive and legalistic extremes.

To conclude, I might add that this treatise has been written under the congenial expectation that it will be met with a serious and scholarly response from its critics. I have included line numbers throughout this work so that precise statements and ideas may be discussed accurately. I do not feel that my perspective presented here is in any way definitive or comprehensive, but rather that it might serve as a starting point for further and more refined discussion on these various matters by others. Therefore it is with collegiate respect and dutiful resolve that I call all students, faculty, and staff; all alumni, supporters, and friends; the NWSA President and Senate; the Student Development Office, the Strategic Study Task Force,

³ To the contrary, I have developed an appreciation of our school's founder, William Bell Riley, through reading his thoughtful and passionate writings of the early 1900s.

and the Northwestern Assessment Committee; President Wesley Willis, and the Board of Trustees of Northwestern College to openly receive this treatise and prayerfully consider its summons for reform.

For God's glory,

James W. Roland

August, 1998

Oxford

lists. Both of these groups can be right and both can be wrong, depending on how they approach the matter.

I was impressed by this one Saturday night at L Abri, when we were having one of our discussion times. On that particular night everybody present was a Christian, many of them from groups in countries where lists had been very much accentuated. They began to talk against the use of taboos, and at first, as I listened to them, I rather agreed with the direction they were going. But as I listened further to this conversation, and as they spoke against the taboos in their own countries, it became quite clear to me that what they really wanted was merely to be able to do the things which the taboos were against. What they really wanted was a more lax Christian life. But we must see that in giving up such lists, in feeling the limitation of the list mentality, we must not do this merely in order to be able to live a looser life: it must be for something deeper. So I think both sides of the discussion can be right and both sides can be wrong. We do not come to true spirituality or the true Christian life merely by keeping a list, but neither do we come to it merely by rejecting the list and then shrugging our shoulders and living a looser life.

If we are considering outward things in relation to true spirituality, we are face to face not with some small list, but with the whole Ten Commandments and all of God's other commands. In other words, if we see the list as a screen, and I say this small list is trite, dead, and cheap, and I take hold of the screen and lift it away, then I am not face to face with what we might call the Law of Love, the fact that I am to love God and I am to love my fellow men.

In the book of Romans, in the 14th chapter, verse 15, we read: But if thy brother be grieved with thy food, now walkest thou not in love. Destroy not him with thy food, for whom Christ died. This is the law of God. In a very real sense there is no liberty here. It is an absolute declaration that we are to do this. It is perfectly true that we can not be saved by doing this; we can not do this in our own strength; and none of us do this perfectly in life. Nevertheless, it is an imperative. It is the absolute command of God. The same thing is true in 1 Corinthians 8:12, 13: But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if food make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

A WORD FROM FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984) was one of the greatest intellectual and spiritual leaders of our time. He founded L Abri Fellowship with his wife Edith in 1955 which, along with their numerous books, has ministered to millions of people around the world. His practical wisdom and experience in the area of Christian spirituality clearly appear in the following excerpt as *àpropos* counsel. The feelings expressed by Dr. Schaeffer have been on my heart since before the writing of this treatise and serve to set the tone for all of my thoughts which follow.

This excerpt is taken from the book *True Spirituality* as published in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, Volume Three*, pp. 201-3.

Often, after a person is born again and asks, "What shall I do next?" he is given a list of things, usually of a limited nature, and primarily negative. Often he is given the idea that if he does not do this series of things (whatever this series of things happens to be in the particular country and location and at the time he happens to live), he will be spiritual. This is not so. The true Christian life, true spirituality, is not merely a negative not-doing of any small list of things. Even if the list began as a very excellent list of things to beware of in that particular historic setting, we still must emphasize that the Christian life, or true spirituality, is more than refraining from a certain external list of taboos in a mechanical way.

Because this is true, almost always there is a reaction: another group of Christians begins to work against such a list of taboos; thus there is a tendency toward a struggle in Christian circles between those who set up a set a certain list of taboos and those who, feeling there is something wrong with this, say, "Away with all taboos, away with all

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

Therefore, when I take hold of the screen of a trite list and I say this is too superficial, and I push it aside, I must see what I am doing. I am not now confronted with a libertine concept, but I am confronted with the whole Ten Commandments and with the Law of Love. So even if we are dealing only with *outward* commands, we have not moved into a looser life; we have moved into something much more profound and heart-searching. As a matter of fact, when we are done with our honest wrestling before God, very often we will find that we will be observing at least some of the taboos on these lists. But having gone deeper, we find that we will be observing them for a completely different reason. Curiously enough we often come around in a circle through our liberty, through the study of the deeper teaching, and find we do want to keep some of these things. But now *not* for the same reason that of social pressure. It is no longer merely a matter of holding to an accepted list in order that Christians will think well of us, but because we have seen that *some* of the things are helpful to other people.

However, eventually the Christian life and true spirituality are not to be seen as outward at all, but *inward*.

CHAPTER 1

THESIS

The primary purpose of this treatise is to historically, psychologically, logically, and scripturally evaluate the disputable social restrictions of Northwestern College's Community Lifestyle Guidelines and to show that with their present geographically and chronologically universal jurisdiction they are obstructive to the College's stated Purpose and Mission as well as disobedient to the teaching of the apostle Paul in scripture (cf. 1Tim. 4:1-7 & Romans 14:3).

Secondarily, the purpose of this paper is to suggest and demonstrate how the College's Lifestyle Guidelines can be practically altered to support the school's Purpose and Mission, adhere to the authoritative teaching of scripture, and promote an attitude more conducive to a true Christian spirituality.

The NWC Argument

In an effort to properly understand the school's position in this matter, let us look at its own statements regarding the Lifestyle Guidelines found in the 1997 - 98 *Student Handbook*:

"... [For regulations,] a distinction is made among (a) absolutes drawn from biblical principles, (b) social or cultural customs which honor community perspectives and (c) personal choices that allow for individual discretion." (p. 5).

In this treatise we will examine category B's restrictions relating to social customs of the Evangelical sub-culture. It is important to note that the school feels these restrictions cannot be recognized as holding the full weight of sound biblical principles [category A] and deny that they can be left to the discretion of individuals [category C]. This distinction is well

made by the school and properly establishes the individual motivations from which their rules come. However, as I will point out in this paper, there has been an inappropriate application of this distinction; for some rules in category B fail to honor category A's biblical principles. This error is manifested in the two kinds of Community Agreements which I will address in this treatise, (1) geographically and chronologically universal (all places at all times) restrictions which the school associates with lifestyle, and (2) geographically particular (campus related) restrictions which the school associates with current trends and appearance.

Geographically and chronologically universal restrictions are set forth in the 98- 99 *Student Handbook*:

All members of the College community shall abstain (throughout the entire calendar year, both on and off campus) from the following: all acts of immorality, use or possession of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, non-medicinal drugs, participation in all forms of gambling and dancing. (p. 13).

Geographically particular regulations are numerous and pertain to various issues from footwear to body piercing. They are here represented by an excerpt from an addendum to the 98- 99 *Student Handbook*: Wearing pierced jewelry, other than earrings, is not permitted on campus at any time. ⁴

Before addressing the problems created by certain of these social constraints, it is important to understand why they have been chosen by the College for unique restriction from the lifestyles of its members. The current arguments for abstaining from certain disputable social practices within the College's 98- 99 *Student Handbook* appear to be:

1. They would inhibit or threaten the College community spirit and environment that honors Christ and assists students in spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, and social growth. (p. 12).
2. The unity of the NWC community relies upon these specific practices being restricted. (p. 8)
3. They help promote a healthy discipline of self-denial. (p. 8)

⁴ *The Northwestern Column*. Earring Policy Revised. September 11, 1998, p. 3.

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

- 70
4. They honor certain cultural and social customs within an evangelical framework. (p. 8)
 5. "The use or misuse of alcohol/tobacco/drugs has been recognized as a potential danger for one's physical and psychological well-being." (p. 13).

75

 6. Gambling is poor stewardship and an unwise use of God-given resources. (p. 13).
 7. "Dancing is, or can be, a morally questionable activity." (p. 14).

80

 8. Styles that "make a statement" by their startling or unusual nature are inconsistent with the College setting. (p. 14).

85 I believe the College fails to satisfactorily demonstrate why these statements are true or should be affirmed as viable premises for the arguments they are intended to support. In Part Two of this critique I will address these premises and suggest why the arguments they support should be negated, clarified, or altered for coherency. In Part Three I will suggest
90 that the Lifestyle Guidelines need to be better analyzed and articulated for effectiveness and viability by the NWC community and how that may practically be done.

Part One: First Things

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RIGHT TO FREE INQUIRY

Biblical discernment is a quality celebrated by scripture, Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." At such a place of higher learning as NWC, free inquiry should be encouraged and supported. If it is not, then a genuine Christian education cannot exist there. Christians should never fear free inquiry, for truth will not defy the tests of scripture or reason.

For one person's interpretation of biblical principles to uninvitedly govern the lives of others is not a good thing. This problem of spiritual abuse has increasingly infected the American church since its reaction to modernism in the Fundamentalist movement. In this discussion, it is important to recognize that the issues at hand are disputable, having never been specifically addressed in scripture. Therefore the Evangelical sub-culture must not canonize a solitary battery of conservative opinion as The Christian perspective.

Therefore, I claim my right and responsibility to free inquiry in this matter and ask for the cooperation and respect of fellow NWC community members that God may be glorified in the earnest investigation of this matter.

CHAPTER 3

THE RECOGNITION OF GOOD GIFTS

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. 1 Timothy 4:1-7

According to the scriptures above, it is very important that we recognize the original goodness⁵ within all creation including the practices restricted by NWC. The following verses give additional direction in understanding the issue. Genesis 1:31a, God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. 1 Corinthians 10:23, "Everything is permissible -- but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible -- but not everything is constructive.

Scriptural principles teach that the abuse of these disputable practices would be wrong, while the temperate practice of certain of these issues is actually encouraged by scripture, for example: the drinking of alcohol (1 Timothy 5:23, John 2:6-10), and dancing (Ecclesiastes 3:4, Jeremiah 31:4). God could not encourage something that is morally wrong

⁵ (as well as potential corruption by man's sin).

or innately evil, so we can assume from the above scriptures that while these things may potentially be used to sin, they are at their essence good.

American Evangelical attitudes appear guilty of provincialism when viewed in the context of historic and global Christianity. In Europe, where the Nineteenth Century Temperance Movement never had a great affect, the drinking of alcohol continues to be considered by most all Evangelicals as normal or good as eating turnips.⁶ In the Netherlands, it is an established cultural custom for the Evangelical minister to conclude a Sunday worship service by smoking quality cigars with church elders outside of the church building. Most every culture in the world has used dance as an ethnic expression of worship, recreation, celebration, and aesthetic pleasure. While this sort of anecdotal evidence certainly does not prove American Evangelical ideas wrong; it begins to illustrate the irregularity of their decisions to label some of these temperate practices as not good enough or edifying for the Christian community to take part in.

The Recognition of NWC

NWC itself displays subtle admissions that some of these practices may have good uses. Though in their publications the college restricts all use of alcohol, they have given verbal permission to students who want to take part in communion services that use alcohol. A similar situation exists with dancing, as the *Student Handbook* clearly states that all forms of dancing are forbidden throughout the year, on and off campus, while the Student Development Office gives verbal approval for couples to dance at their own wedding celebration. And of course one of the most notable hypocrisies of NWC is the frequent choreography in its musicals and dramas.

All of these examples show that the NWC of today, differing from its Fundamentalist youth, indicates by its practice that these experiences are innately good and have potential for being used in a right way. If it didn't, it probably would not allow them in any context. To hold such a position would be ontologically dualistic and Gnostic which I don't believe NWC is. However NWC is giving that image by its official stance as recorded in the school's publications.

⁶ The American Temperance Movement will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

195 I believe it is important to remember that Christ has redeemed all
creation, "Far as the curse is found."⁷ He reigns over all physical and spiritual
aspects of creation. According to the answer of the first question of the
Westminster Catechism, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy
Him forever. Part of our enjoying God may involve enjoying what He has
200 created, including the beauty of dance, and the miracle of grape juice
fermentation. Without a doubt, as sinners we find ways to sin in every
human action. But since scripture does not indicate specifically that these
practices are *essentially* sinful, the question becomes one of scale or degree of
likelihood that they will facilitate sin to a specific individual.⁸ This is of
205 course a disputable matter which must be referred to the biblical principal of
the weaker brother addressed in Part Two of this critique.

⁷ From Isaac Watts *Joy to the World*.

⁸ For a very helpful perspective on the impact of sin
on creation see *Creation Regained* by A. Woltiers (1985)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

210

215

Part Two: The Theses

CHAPTER 4

A YOKE OF TRADITION: A BRIEF REVIEW OF FUNDAMENTALIST HISTORY

The term Fundamentalism came to be used in America around the early 1920s to describe a Protestant Christian movement reacting to modernism and stressing the infallibility of scripture as a literal historical record.⁹ These conservatives claimed the essential doctrines of the Christian faith were the creation of the world, virgin birth, physical resurrection, atonement by the sacrificial death of Christ, and the Second Coming. Over time, this movement became extremely militant in its philosophy, calling for strict adherence to certain social rules and theological beliefs supposedly essential to a true Christian world-view. Fundamentalists nurtured a partisan mind-set that would remain deaf to counterarguments and counterevidence. This parochialism seems to have been motivated by ignorance and a lack of exposure to cultural and intellectual activity, while in certain cases it can clearly be seen as a reaction to German Higher Criticism.

Items commonly banned by some Fundamentalists and Evangelicals have been alcohol, tobacco, dancing, movie attendance, card playing, gambling, trousers on women, long hair on men, modern music styles (especially rock or jazz music), mixed bathing, inter-racial dating or marriage, makeup, jewelry, video arcades, and the friendship of unbelievers and non-similar Christians as well as others. Also, for many Fundamentalists, the King James Version of the Bible is considered the only translation trustworthy of relating the inspiration of the autographs.

⁹ See *Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition--Unabridged*, 1987 ed., s.v. "Fundamentalism."

Evangelicalism is a relatively new term which was popularized in the 1950's when certain Christians broke from, and no longer wanted to be associated with, the soured Fundamentalist Movement. Evangelicalism has inherited many provincial characteristics from Fundamentalism, though it seems to be less militant, as historian George Marsden humorously comments, "A Fundamentalist is an Evangelical who is angry about something."¹⁰ I believe it will be clearly shown from this chapter that certain Evangelical social restrictions are simply the leftover remnants of a previous reactive movement and that earlier in history many of these practices were considered good and fully acceptable for temperate Christian use in America.

The Temperance Movement and the Birth of Fundamentalism

At the end of the Civil War in 1865 a large number of veterans and victims of the war slipped into the addiction of alcoholism. At the same time, America was making the great transition from a generally rural society into an urban one. Many cities began to thrive with the boom of industrial manufacturing and entrepreneurs hired thousands of lower-class laborers to work in their factories and mines. The change created large slums in American cities and made for the infamous moral hypocrisy of the economically segregated Victorian Age.

The slums and ghettos began to explode with every opportunity of vice to ease the broken hearts and minds of a war-torn nation. Opium, prostitution, lewd plays in the dance and theater halls, gambling, and smoking were abundant distractions; but most common were the cheap, hard liquors sold at the nearest corner for the sole purpose of getting drunk quickly. It was during the Victorian Age that America experienced its first national plunge into mass degradation and self-debauchery. The Civil War had, after all, brought suffering for both the North and South. Great change was to be marked in society and churches during this period until the end of WWI.

The goals of the Christian movement to abolish slavery had been accomplished and now it was time for abolitionist energy to be channeled elsewhere; it was turned on the urban slums. Revivalists such as Dwight L. Moody and the multiplying Salvation Army officers invaded city slums with a simple new message of health for the suffering and hope for the dying.

¹⁰ *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* p.

Many women and businessmen took active roles in this work as they feared for their husbands, sons, brothers, and employees' plight in the spiritual, social, political, and financial crisis of the day. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was instituted by largely Protestant backing to house and instruct the single young men of the urban environment in the "ways of the Lord." Moral Reform was the popular outcry and seemingly the only hope to save a nation from its impending destruction. The reordering of individuals' private lives was what they believed could save society while the "evil drink" was paraded as civilization's greatest enemy.

A few abolitionist leaders such as Lyman Beecher had called for temperance of alcohol in the mid 1800s, but it was only after the war that a large following first gathered to make abstinence a national Christian movement in the United States.¹¹ As creatures of the gutter were converted to a new life by salvation, they began preaching against the "Devil's vices" themselves with the swiftness and momentum of a sharply rebounding pendulum. A personal sense of guilt and sin was so stressed and encouraged by revivalists that converts sometimes elaborated and embellished their testimonies of the gutter in order to emphasize the magnificence of their salvation. Soon the call was not for mere temperance and moderation of alcohol, but a sweeping generalization of absolute abstinence of alcohol along with all other potential vice. So along with drink, out went dance, card playing, theatrical performances, gambling, tobacco, and all other social practices associated with their former life due to their mental association with the Old Man.

It is interesting to note that an original meaning of temperance is "the habitual moderation of a natural appetite or passion, esp. in the use of alcoholic liquors." (Random House Dictionary). Though inaccurately titled, the movement largely continued under the banner of Temperance while in reality prohibition was the true goal. Over time, the word was so greatly misused that now modern dictionaries also include the definition, "total abstinence of alcoholic liquors."

The Infamous "Grape Juice Myth"

¹¹ Note: Contrary to popular belief, independent scholar Cassandra Niemczyk dismisses the proposition that New England Puritans advocated alcoholic abstinence. Rather, they frequently enjoyed beer with meals and rum at weddings. *Christian History Magazine*, Did You Know? (Vol. XIII, No. 1) p. 2.

There have been some efforts in recent years to dress-up this old Fundamentalist argument that says the Bible means grape juice when it says wine. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi carries on this tradition in his book *Wine in the Bible*.¹² He feels that drinking alcoholic beverages is morally wrong and good Christians ought, not only to abstain from intoxicating substances themselves, but also to help others do likewise.¹³ He contends that the Hebrew and Greek words *yayin* and *oinos* (usually translated wine) can both be translated two different ways according to the following principle, the positive references [in the Bible] to wine have to do with unfermented and unintoxicating grape juice. . . . On the other hand, the negative references to wine have to do with fermented and intoxicating wine.¹⁴

This simplistic approach is unsound in its hermeneutic and, as Dr. Bacchiocchi admits, it is contradictory to most all modern English translations. *Strong's Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible* gives the simple meaning for the Hebrew word *yayin*, from an unused root mean. to effervesce; wine (as fermented); by impl. intoxication:--banqueting, wine, wine [-bibber].¹⁵

Bacchiocchi's work offers no solidly reasonable argument, and, unfortunately, uses ill-structured logic. For example, he argues, Hosea 4:11 provides no justification for a moderate use of alcoholic beverages for two reasons. First, because wine and new wine are mentioned figuratively, as representative of the good gifts God had provided to the children of Israel, gifts which they had used for idolatrous purposes. Second, even if wine and

¹² See

http://www2.andrews.edu/~samuele/books/wine_in_the_bible/

¹³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, A Preview of *Wine in the Bible* p. 9 [www page]. Biblical Perspectives [cited October 5, 1998]. Available from http://www2.andrews.edu/~samuele/books/wine_in_the_bible/1.html

¹⁴ Bacchiocchi, p. 3.

¹⁵ Strong's Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible by James Strong, Nashville: Crusade Bible Publishers, Inc. (H3196. Yayin), p. 49.

340 new wine were alcoholic, they are condemned in the text for taking away
understanding, irrespective of the quantity used. In his first reason he states
that wine and new wine are non-alcoholic and a gift from God. In his
second reason he contradicts himself by supposing that the same reference
345 to wine is alcoholic and condemned as intrinsically evil. This sort of vacillation
is too great to be ignored in a work that purports to be a scholarly study.

Mainstream Evangelicals will find an intriguing twist in this
reading as the penultimate chapter of Bacchiocchi's book is dedicated to the
abstinence teachings of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and its foremost
prophetess, Ellen G. White. It is interesting to note that this alliance with
350 Ellen G. White makes a direct tie from Dr. Bacchiocchi's views to the
American abstinence movements of the mid 1800s, which we have reviewed
earlier. While this book was authored by a voice outside of mainstream
Evangelicalism, it nonetheless presents the "Grape Juice" argument in more
detail than any other work within conservative circles. However, it would
355 seem that Bacchiocchi's misuse of history and linguistics was actually the
attempt to place an academic facade on a simpleton's argument.

A Brief Sketch of the Life and Moral Philosophy of William Bell Riley

360 William Bell Riley¹⁶ was born March 22nd, 1861 in Green County
Indiana eighteen days after Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office and
twenty one days before the Carolinians opened fire on Federal forces in Fort
Sumter. Shortly after William's birth, his father, Branson Riley, moved the
family South across the Ohio River into Kentucky to his own
365 birthplace Union, Boone County where he could escape Northern
persecution for being a slavery sympathizer. Reminiscing his days at the farm
and log-cabin home, William B. Riley recounted in the Northwestern Bible
School *Scroll* of 1931, "My youth knew nothing of any other State than Old
Kentucky—the State of fast horses, beautiful women, purely tobacco and
370 eloquent orators such as the Breckennridges, Henry Clay and others."¹⁷

Riley aspired to be a lawyer from his humble childhood and
ardently loved school debates. The curriculum of his grade school had a high

¹⁶ Note: University of Notre Dame historian George Marsden refers to Riley as "the Arch-Fundamentalist (Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism)."

¹⁷ Riley, Marie Acomb. *The Dynamic of a Dream*. 1938, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 20.

regard for the oratorical art and listed subjects like: RESOLVED; That the
Democratic Form of Government is Preferable to the Monarchical ;
375 RESOLVED; That single Blessedness is to be Desired above the Married
State ; RESOLVED; That Liquor is an Unmitigated Evil. ¹⁸ Later in life, as
an established Fundamentalist figure himself, Dr. Riley recalled that from his
mother's ancestry had come prominent proponents of both Abolition and
Prohibition; and being Quakers, they were of course ardent advocates of
380 national and international peace. ¹⁹

William's second wife Marie Acomb Riley describes the spiritual
environment of her husband's teen years in the biography of his life, *Dynamic
of a Dream*,

385 At that time, and with that Church, it was perfectly
understood that dancing even the old-fashioned
square dance would be unexcused if indulged in
by its members; that fox-hunting was a bit under the
ban; and that horse-trading was regarded as a form
390 of gambling. However, William had been brought up
to believe that to accept Jesus Christ as Savior
demanded of one extremely careful conduct here
and assured one of eternal safety hereafter.²⁰

395 This form of spirituality became the impetus for Riley's
outspokenness on issues of evangelism and moral reform. From the age of
eighteen, the young Kentuckian worked his way through school and college
as a part-time tobacco farmer and once-a-month supply-preacher until he
finally graduated from Hanover College with a first place in debate.
400 However his desire for a glorious career in law eventually yielded to the call
of the ministry.

Following his graduation from seminary in 1888, Riley held
several pastorates before arriving at the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis
in 1897. As he settled into the metropolitan pastorate, he quickly found
405 opponents in local officials and newspapers, such as the *Minneapolis Tribune*

¹⁸ Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 42.

¹⁹ Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 20.

²⁰ Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 43.

and St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, due to his polemical writings, sermons and debates on social reform, temperance (i.e. abstinence), and the evils of Darwinian evolution and communism. However many of the conservative-minded liked his zeal and fervor and an increasing band of followers became
410 attracted by his stunning oratory and uncompromising beliefs.

William Bell Riley was fain to reform the practices of his new church as well as those of society. Shortly after his arrival in Minneapolis, he accused the Ladies Aid Society of the First Baptist Church of presenting questionable entertainments at their monthly suppers and annual Fairs.
415 Pastor Riley asked for the abolition of these fund-raising events explaining that in addition to their questionable nature, they were inefficient money-making schemes which inhibited his own plans of larger-scale fund-raising.²¹ He then announced a series of sermons on Church-Membership versus Modern Amusements and devoted a sermon each to the evils of
420 dance, card-playing, and theatre-going.²² These sermons were printed in booklet form and promptly distributed to the congregation.

In his critical work *The Crisis of the Church*, Riley later remarked,

The opponents of the Church these are as
425 multitudinous as the agencies of Satan, but some of them, by their very strength and persistence, stand most in mark. Chief of these must be mentioned the sensuous stage, the lawless saloon, the social slum, successful commerce, and the theological septic.
430 [condemning worldly amusements within churches, Riley continued] . . . congregations that wear the name of Christ even turn their sanctuaries in to stage coaching houses, and when the performance reaches the public attention it is advertised by an innocent church girl, photographed in the act of a ballet
435 dance; and when it is rendered the newspaper reporter gives it due popularity by his salacious hints

²¹ Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 71.

²² Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 71.

of beautiful faces and full-rounded limbs. All this is done in the name of sweet charity, . . .²³

440 Following Riley's abolition of the Ladies Aid Society's social functions, and several related incidents, the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis split and Riley presided over the remaining members with bolstered dogmatism in his stance on social and lifestyle issues.

445 Riley's social activism was met with no greater contempt than by the liquor regime of Minneapolis. The Baptist pastor had engaged in clashes with liquor crowds during his Chicago pastorate and was eager for a fair swing at the corruption of the Twin Cities. He soon established the Civic Federation which, in association with local ministers, the Home
450 Protective group and the Anti-Saloon League, aimed at cleaning up the town. Dr. Riley was selected to chair the Committee on Legal Closing (by appointment of the Federation Council of Churches) which sent an open letter to Mayor J.C. Haynes demanding that the State law regarding the closing of saloons at 11:00 p.m. and on Sundays be enforced or steps would
455 be taken for his impeachment.²⁴ As Mayor Haynes saw that a show-down would be imminent, he conceded and the laws were enforced, but the battles over Twin City liquor establishments continued with increasing intensity.

In a sermon entitled *Playing the Fool*, Riley declared,

460 If the men of Minneapolis paid attention to the Word of God's commands, every blind pig of our city would shut up to-morrow. There would be such happiness in our homes as this city has never seen, and such joy in Heaven as only the angels of God
465 can have. . . many imagine that they can go right on disregarding this counsel of God, and escape the evil consequences. It is the devil's delusion.²⁵

²³ Riley, William Bell. *The Crisis of the Church*. 1914, New York; Charles C. Cook, p. 168.

²⁴ Riley, Marie Acomb. *The Dynamic of a Dream*. 1938, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 91.

²⁵ Riley, William Bell. *Revival Sermons*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929, p. 139.

470 In his book, *Revival Sermons*, William B. Riley explained that the Bible denounced alcohol repeatedly citing Proverbs 23:31-32, Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. ²⁶ Throughout his writings and sermons, Riley told countless stories to illuminate the evils of alcohol--though all had the same scenario-- of the prominent business man who ruined his health, family and career because he sold-out to the temptation of the poisonous drink,

480 A man in Chicago testified that he began drinking by spending 5 ¢ a week, taking a single glass of beer a week. When he began he was earning a salary of \$1,500. After five years he had grown such an appetite for liquor as to lose every position which had opened to him, and though a man of good education, natural refinement, he walked the streets of that great city begging bread.²⁷

490 Complete abstinence from alcohol was the only way in Riley's mind to obey the Scriptures and avoid intemperance. The zealous doctor reasoned that the best way to enforce universal abstinence in the Twin Cities was to dry up the source of intemperance by attacking the industry rather than the individual. Though his addresses were blatantly dualistic in perspective, he won many with his ardent passion for reform, The beverage liquor business must die. No matter who does it, no matter where it is done, no matter how it is done, no matter what it pays, no matter how long it takes to kill it . . . it must die. ²⁸

With the connections and support Riley had gained in the war against booze, he began to form a sphere of influence about him what would

²⁶ Riley, William Bell, p. 139.

²⁷ Riley, William B. *Messages for the Metropolis*. Chicago: The Winona Publishing Company, 1906. p. 69-70.

²⁸ Riley, William Bell. *The Crisis of the Church*. 1914, New York; Charles C. Cook, p. 174.

500 become his Fundamentalist empire. Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School was begun on October 2, 1902 by Dr. Riley and the members of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis to train pastors, missionaries and evangelists in a two year course. Riley had found that there was a severe shortage of pastors to fill the vacant pulpits of the rural Northwest. At the time there were less than three hundred Baptist churches in Minnesota (mostly in rural areas) and ninety percent of them were without a pastor.²⁹ Of the pastors that were ministering in the Northwestern states, few of them were Premillennialists and Riley wanted to multiply the supporters of this relatively new doctrine with his new school.

510 Northwestern began with seven students who met for daily class with Dr. Riley in a church side-room. The Bible was their chief textbook. Within weeks the number of student grew to thirty-five and Dr. A. J. Frost, a national Bible teacher from California, was made Dean of the school. Northwestern acquired its own property and was made interdenominational in 1905. Riley described his delight at the school's increasing success in his book *The Menace of Modernism*,

520 My soul renews its youth when I stand in the midst of the young men and women now studying in the Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School . . . none of whom are far removed from the day of their regeneration and consecration, and most of whom are . . . the raw material ready to be hand-made for God. ³⁰

525 President Riley seized this raw material for making an army of Christian servants, willing to live sanctified lives in order to be shining lights to the secular and modernist world and carry on the great work of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association which he had recently helped to establish. Admission to the Northwestern school was not easy, and

²⁹ Riley, Marie Acomb. *The Dynamic of a Dream*. 1938, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. P. 147.

³⁰ Riley, Marie Acomb, p. 149.

prospective students had to be willing to submit to strict social regulations.³¹ An attitude of lifestyle moldability was required of each student, as a Northwestern pamphlet of the 1910s suggests, Among the indispensable conditions of admission are approved Christian character, consecration, . . . willingness to do hard work and to be taught, criticized and guided.³²

Northwestern Evangelical Seminary was founded by Riley in 1935 and admitted forty-seven students in its first year. The Northwestern Liberal Arts college was added in 1944. Three years later Dr. Riley made a dying request of William F. Billy Graham to assume the duties of president over the Northwestern Schools upon his death. The young evangelist reluctantly agreed and filled the capacity until 1952.³³

A Brief History of NWC Lifestyle Regulation Policy

The following time line records significant changes in school policy from 1947 to the present and is helpful in tracing the administration's change in attitude in regard to lifestyle issues since the death of the school's founder, William Bell Riley, in 1947.

1948-49 In the *NWC Bulletin* of 1948-49, under the auspices of the then new President Billy Graham, the following summary of student rules was published, "Smoking, drinking alcoholic liquors, dancing, card playing, movie attendance and other worldly amusements are forbidden. In their place a positive social program becoming to consecrated young people is maintained." (p. 36).

³¹ It should be noted that unlike the school's policy today, the initial implementation of lifestyle regulations was not to facilitate unity within the institutional community, but rather because issues such as dance, consumption of alcohol and gambling were considered morally unacceptable by William Bell Riley and his administration.

³² Taken from a college pamphlet of the 1910s, p. 9-- now on file in the Berntsen Resource Center Archives.

³³ Woodbridge, *John D. Great Leaders of the Christian Church*. Chicago: Moody Press. 1988, p. 369.

1955-56 Seven years later, under the presidency of Richard A. Elvee (1953-57), dancing and card playing no longer appeared within the restrictions, "Students are . . . required to abstain from such practices as the use of alcoholic liquors and tobacco and attendance at questionable places of amusement, such as the motion picture theaters." (*Student Handbook 1955-56* p. 20). That same year, men were not allowed to have any facial hair and women could not wear slacks for "normal street wear." (pp.18 & 19).

1958-65 Records of social regulations are not preserved in the college archives.

1972-73 In this year, while Dr. William Berntsen held the presidency (1966-84), the ban on card playing reappeared in the *Student Handbook* as did a restriction on dancing though for the first time it prohibited only the *social* variety. The well known verse abstain from all appearance of evil,³⁴ was touted as a suitable guideline for students.

1974-75 According to the *Student Handbook*, card playing was once again allowed.

1976-77 Men were again allowed to have facial hair while the rest of their hair was regulated to "not fall below the top of the collar" and public displays of affection were considered "inappropriate behavior" on campus (p. 14). During that year movie attendance was allowed, and rules applied to all members of the community and no longer just to students, "The members of the College community are to abstain from drinking intoxicants, using tobacco, using illegal drugs, gambling, and social dancing." (*Student Handbook* p. 14). In this handbook many other areas of personal dress became strictly regulated. The purpose for all these restrictions it was explained, "is to create a climate of progress toward the development of constructive spiritual, academic, and aesthetic values." (p. 13).

³⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

- 1981-82 Secular rock music was banned due to the administration's pronouncement that it does not spiritually uplift. (*Student Handbook 1981-82*).
- 600 1986-87 In Donald O. Erickson's second year as president (1984-98), the college moved to include Christian rock music on its black list with the resolution, "The college rejects music that is not culturally or spiritually uplifting. Most rock music does not meet these standards." (*Student Handbook 1986-87*).
- 605 1989-90 The school made another change in policy related to music by restating the above rule to allow for most all forms of Christian music but few secular. "The college rejects music that is not culturally or spiritually uplifting. Many forms of secular music do not meet these standards." (*Student Handbook 1989-90*).
- 610 1995-96 Male hair length was unregulated though earrings for men were taboo. Dancing was still allowed as long as it wasn't for social purposes.
- 615 1996-97 In a notable move, all forms of dancing were officially banned in the *Student Handbook*, not just those in social settings (p. 9).
- 1998-99 With the advent of President Wesley Willis the year before, males were allowed to wear earrings on campus for the first time (Addendum to the *Student Handbook 1998-99*).
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A critical observer might be prompted to ask several questions as a result of reviewing these policy developments--such as:

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1. Why were card playing, movie attendance and facial hair once forbidden to NWC students?
 2. If male hair length was truly disruptive to NWC social order in 1976, then why isn't it disruptive to it now?
 - 630 3. Why in 1996 did the NWC administration move (for the first time in forty-two years) to disallow students from taking part in non-social dancing?
 4. Why were males finally allowed to wear earrings on campus in 1998 but not before?
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AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

These past modifications in policy are interesting to observe as they correspond to changes in culture, administration, and chronological distance from the Temperance Movement of the late 1800's. They illustrate that the subjectivity of policy decisions were based on foundations as variable and inconsistent as administrators' quirks rather than a fixed standard. The fact is that our Fundamentalist forebears of the 1800s, such as William Bell Riley, deemed these practices *guilty by association*—card playing was associated with gambling and gambling with an addicted gambler, and eventually the entire saloon atmosphere.

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645 However, in 1999 the general Christian moral perception *should be* better developed and able to comprehend these complicated matters without resorting to the Fundamentalist ethical dualism of the 1800s; consequently, many modern Evangelicals agree that playing a game with cards will not necessarily cause a person to become an addicted gambler or a prostitute. In the cases of card playing, movie attendance, the abolition of facial hair and earrings at Northwestern, this fallacy of *guilt by association* was realized and the regulations were finally remitted by progressive administrators and board members. The final question I pose in regard to this matter is when will this realization of proper discernment be applied to the temperate use of currently banned items such as alcohol and dance?

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CHAPTER 5

THE APPEAL TO SOCIAL ORDER

Northwestern College has developed a policy of restrictions within its Community Lifestyle Guidelines which are necessary for community members to functionally co-exist in peace. Such an action is necessary for any group of fallen people to live together. Our government has instituted laws to protect its citizens and maintain peace. However, the fathers of our nation understood the importance of the liberty of individuals and formed our constitution in a way that protected those liberties while maintaining the peace among the body.

That has unfortunately not taken place within the Community Lifestyle Guidelines of Northwestern College. According to my perception, there has been an abuse of authority to subtly manipulate community members into a theologically provincial and morally "safe" lifestyle. I do not believe that the appeal to social order is likely the original or the true purpose of the College's geographically universal regulations, but rather, Fundamentalism is. However, I think it is important to address this topic of social order because when the appeal to the weaker brother has been effectively refuted in the next chapter, this excuse would probably be the first to replace it. Also, the Lifestyle Guidelines of NWC seem to be appealing to environmental social order as a contribution to communal unity. The school claims that the specific universally restricted practices would inhibit or threaten the "College community spirit and environment that honors Christ and assists students in spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, and social growth." (*Student Handbook* 1997-98, p. 9) and that "social or cultural customs which honor community perspectives" are preserved by these restrictions. So this discussion involves a question of environment and social order. One of the first things we must do is define what social order is.

Random House Dictionary tells us that order refers to "a proper, satisfactory, working condition" of something. So the orderliness of a society

would refer to the effectiveness it exercises in functioning properly; if the purpose or mission of NWC is obstructed, then social order is out of synchronism. We must then ask what NWC's function is so we may determine how it might be hindered from functioning properly.

"College Mission: Northwestern College is committed to providing Christ-centered education which prepares growing Christians to have a positive spiritual impact upon the homes, churches, communities and marketplaces of the world. (*Student Handbook* 1997-98, p.4). Succinctly, the goal of NWC is to educate Christians to have a positive spiritual impact on the world; sin would hinder this mission from being accomplished. So the question comes back to whether or not certain practices are sinful--which is a disputable issue. Disputable practices are to be referred to Paul's discussion of the weaker brother found in Chapter Six of this treatise.

To conclude my response to this argument, the two following points are presented:

First, if the claim is made that the disputable practices a member is involved in affects the environment of other members, then we must move on to the issue of the weaker brother in the next chapter.

Second, if the arm of the NWC "community" extends into an individuals personal, off-campus life and their perspective on disputable issues, then NWC has crossed the line into authoritarian abuse and legalism condemned by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-7 and Romans 14:3.

If NWC wishes to maintain an appeal to Social Order, it would have to show how the practice of disputable issues off campus would contribute to the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, and social decline of other members in the community setting (**Figure 1**). For example, if a member were to have a glass of wine with his dinner, how would he disrupt the order of the NWC community? I believe this is an untenable appeal. For the school to require anything beyond biblical moderation off campus is going too far. The potential for drinking to be abused certainly exists, but if we are going to refer to *potential* methods of sinning, there are plenty of gray areas to evaluate and we would again end up at the subject of the weaker brother.

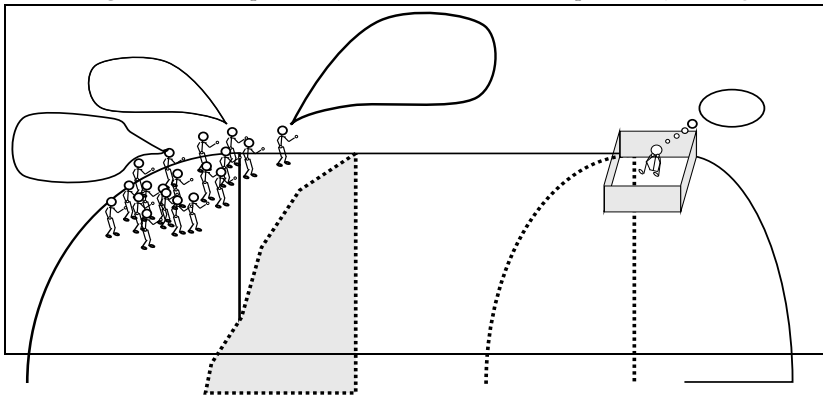
The Appeal to Immature Students

This appeal raises a serious question about the aggressiveness NWC exerts when it imposes absolute abstinence on all of its members. If parents want their children to totally abstain from alcohol or other practices while students at NWC, then the Student Development Office might consider developing an option whereby parents could contract the school to

monitor their children. However, the College's primary concern is not to finish the job that parents didn't. Meanwhile, there are numerous students, faculty, and staff who can make mature, God-honoring decisions about their Christian lifestyle without the parental oversight of NWC. As it stands, current NWC policy treats every community member like a child, trying to

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Figure 1 The Spiritually Weak Confine the Spiritually Strong



protect them from themselves, while at the same time using the cover-up excuse that off campus activities might disrupt the unity and social order of the community (Figure 2).

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After all, do we regard NWC as a microcosm or macrocosm of the universal church? If a macrocosm, then the administration may go above and beyond the principles of scripture to address various issues in whatever manner they wish. I believe this is too high a view of a parachurch organization. If NWC is a microcosm of the universal church, then the administration must adhere to the principles of scripture in regard to the church.

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As a final note, we must realize that many parents have found moderation a much more effective method of training their children to avoid alcoholism than abstinence. For them, temperance seems to be more successful as it provides a context for young people to understand proper balance and not an illogical, hard refusal to react against. NWC is obstructing parents who desire to use moderation to train their children in matters such as dance and alcohol.

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Lifestyles and Trends

As we have noted earlier in the Introduction, the College claims to distinguish lifestyle distinctives from tastes related to current trends by not regulating the latter off campus. However, according to the Random House dictionary, tastes and attitudes are components of one's lifestyle, "The habits, attitudes, tastes, moral standards, economic level, etc., that together constitute the mode of living of an individual or group."³⁵

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Because taste in personal appearance reveals something of one's attitudes it should be treated the same as other aspects of lifestyle. The term "lifestyle" is a friendly, less offensive word connoting social equality, but perhaps what the College is really distinguishing between (in making certain rules apply to off campus life) are moral standards and taste. Moral standards are what we mean by standards of what is right and wrong. This means that the issues which are restricted at all times and at all places are really being restricted because the school believes they are morally wrong rather than merely lifestyle choices. This issue of controlling the choices of disputable moral matters will be fully dealt with in the next chapter in relation to the weaker brother.

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The Appeal to a NWC Reputation

Community Witness and Testimony: Northwestern encourages students, faculty and staff to maintain an honorable testimony and witness for Christ in the surrounding metropolitan area. As representatives of Jesus Christ, members of the campus community need to be aware that their actions and attitudes contribute to a collective impression of Christianity.

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The actions and attitudes of College members also impact the reputation of the College. Actions which reflect negatively on the reputation of the College are viewed in a serious light and may result in discussion leading to a disciplinary response.³⁶

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If we are to speak of a NWC community reputation, then we must take into consideration what ideals the entire community wants to be

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³⁵ Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition--Unabridged, 1987 ed., s.v. "lifestyle".

³⁶ 97-98 *Student Handbook*, pp. 10-11.

identified with. I don't want to be known as a Fundamentalist who can't reasonably explain why his community has established rules that never appeared in the Bible and were only popularized in America in the late 1800's.

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795 However, the strongest argument against an appeal to the NWC image comes from the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:20-23:

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. NIV

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In reality this appeal is just a mask to cover the same ancient excuse of the legalistic Jews who used policy as a leash to restrict other Christians from the disputable issues. NWC is a Christian college and, as such, should endeavor to have a true Christian image. Sinful practices clearly outlined in scripture should be universally restricted by NWC, not small disputable practices which offer nothing in the way of communicating the true essence of Christianity. The disputable issues eventually become trite taboos which give the watching world an entirely wrong impression of the main values of Christianity. Gossiping and slander have never rightly been part of a Christian image, but ballroom dancing and moderate consuming of alcohol have been.

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Some may say that NWC has a right to a professional, clean-cut look the same as a business corporation. However we must realize that Christianity is bigger than corporate dress-codes. We should also note that corporations do not establish regulations for employee appearance or lifestyle outside the workplace. NWC is unique from the corporate world in that they dictate member's lives off campus.

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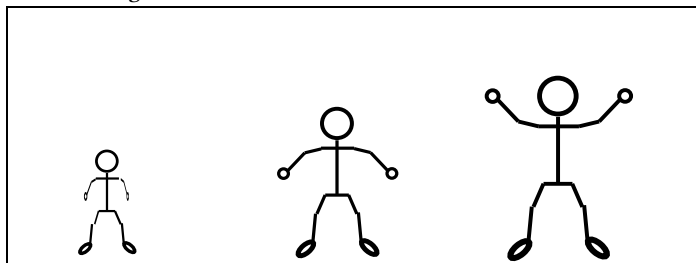
CHAPTER 6

THE APPEAL TO THE WEAKER BROTHER

The NWC Argument

In the Lifestyle Guidelines' section of disputable lifestyle issues, the scripture passages of Romans 14:1-15:6 and 1 Corinthians chapters 8 through 10 are cited as guides (p. 5). These passages of scripture deal specifically with the issue of members of the Christian body with stronger and weaker faiths and the liberties they share. I do not believe that the College's position is supported by these passages. In analyzing this issue, we must first properly establish from scripture who the weaker brother is. According to the College's portrayal of the weaker brother, one might picture an immature student who has a weakness inclining toward a particular sin. While there is a real need to help those who are easily tempted to commit particular sins, I do not believe that is what Romans 14:1-15:6 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 are referring to. When Paul addresses the problem of the weaker brother, he is referring to

Figure 2 Paul's Desire for the Weaker Brother



the Christian individuals whose spiritual lives are weak, while his own faith is strong. Paul's desire is to see the weak brother be made strong in the faith like himself. The way in which the weaker brother is vulnerable is very specific--he is a legalist.³⁷ When Paul refers to the weaker brother he is speaking of a Christian who mentally reduces the Old Testament Law to a standard which he expects men to meet. The legalist sets up seemingly arbitrary rules outside of the bounds of scripture and attempts to argue that it is universally wrong for Christians to participate in these certain actions. Paul says that for such a person to participate in an action which he or she believes is sinful, then the person would logically be rebelling and actually committing sin, but it is against their own conscience and not the actual universal moral law of God (other than rebellion of course).

Scripture

Now let us go to scripture and examine the central verses relating to this matter. For sake of brevity, I have included only the addresses of the most pertinent verses which must be viewed in their full context. My observations and summaries appear in italics.

Acts 15:10-29

The Church Council at Jerusalem had been faced by certain members of the Pharisees who wanted the gentile believers to be circumcised according to the law, while Peter, speaking in verse 10, opposed such lifestyle restrictions as unnecessary and unprofitable. The Council responds with three very simple rules of conduct,

You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality (29). Paul however, later contradicts the Council by teaching that food sacrificed to idols is nothing to be avoided (1 Corinthians 8:7-8).

Romans 14:1-3

Paul instructs the Romans that to be weak in faith is undesirable--the goal of sanctification is for the weak to become strong (implied) The Strong in faith must

³⁷ For a very interesting study of this issue see Dr. Jack Arnold's article "The Key to Christian Liberty" in the July 1997 issue of *Table Talk Magazine* (p. 14) in which he distinguishes between (1) the weaker brother, (2) the legalistic brother, (3) the libertine brother, and (4) the stronger brother.

be patient with the weak and not tempt him or her to commit, what for them may be, sin. The strong enjoy the variety of God's gifts while the weak refrain from some. God has accepted both the strong in the Faith as well as the weak and no Christian has a right to despise a fellow believer.

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Romans 15:2-3

As Christ exemplified self-sacrifice, we are to help the weaker brother with his burdens.

890 1 Corinthians 8:7-10

This passage establishes the concept of the strong and weak faiths in the book of Corinthians. According to Gordon D. Fee, the conscientiously strong at Corinth were encouraging all other believers to embrace their "freedom" and join them at festival meals (used as restaurants in the ancient world) in the temples of idols. The strong understood that the "idols" were nothing and that the ceremony of sacrifice was nothing either. These other believers were still thinking of the food as having been "sacrificed to idols" (true idolatry in their minds) and for them it would have been sinful because they were mishandling the arguments of the strong. (p. 386-7). Fee suggests that the strong believers had actually invited the weak to the temple feasts ("How could they 'see' it if they were not present?" [Fee, 386].) and there the weak had participated in what they thought was idol worship--clearly sin.

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1 Corinthians 9:3-20

Paul claims his right to liberty in what others consider a disputable matter.

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The Lord's Gospel is primary. There is a law higher than religious tradition, but for the sake of the weak, one may need to abstain in their presence from gifts that one's Christian freedom otherwise allows.

1 Corinthians 10:25-27

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Paul instructs the believers in practical rules of conduct in vv. 25-31: If there is a question of whether or not someone else will think a practice constitutes sin or not, the strong are not obligated to succumb to the weak's zeal toward error.

1 Corinthians 10:28 But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake --29 the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?
Here Gordon Fee expresses some interesting and original ideas:

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More difficult to determine is what kind of person Paul envisages with this "anyone." The options are: (1) the host; (2) a pagan fellow

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guest; (3) a fellow believer. Each of these has its strengths and weaknesses. Least likely is the possibility of a fellow believer. . . [Here Fee demonstrates at length why the informant is probably not a fellow believer]. We may assume, then, that Paul intended a fellow guest who was himself a pagan. But that leaves us with two further questions: (1) What does Paul envisage to be the motivation behind such an informant? (2) What is the relationship between the believer's forbearance and the pagan's "conscience"? Or to put that in another way, How would a pagan's "conscience" be affected by what a Christian did or did not do? Although the answer to the first question may ultimately be irrelevant to Paul's own concern, it seems likely that he envisages the pagan as trying to "help the Christian out" rather than as putting him/her to the test, as it were. It is not difficult to imagine how such a thing could have happened since all Gentiles would know about Jewish scruples over such food, and since they would also think of Christianity at this stage as a basically Jewish sect.

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But the second question is more difficult. Paul's point is that one should forbear "both for the sake of the one who told you and for conscience' sake," which is immediately clarified in v. 29a: "by conscience I mean the other person's, not yours." The clarification itself seems necessary; otherwise the proviso in v. 28 not only limits freedom but allows what he has already twice disallowed--namely that food can have anything to do with Christian conscience. But how can it have anything to do with a pagan's conscience? Probably very little at all. The clue lies in the meaning of "conscience," which is not to be understood as "a moral arbiter" but as "moral consciousness." The one who has pointed out the sacrificial origins of this meat to a Christian has done so out of a sense of moral obligation to the Christian, believing that Christians, like Jews, would not eat such food. So as not to offend that person, nor his/her moral expectations of Christians, and precisely because it is not a matter of Christian moral consciousness, one should forbear under these circumstances.

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If this is the correct understanding of the text, then what Paul is not referring to is a fellow believer's conscience as restricting the actions of another, as is so often assumed. The significance of the observation is that Paul does not allow any Christian to make food a matter of

Christian conscience; he does not even do that in Rom. 14, where he does allow people their differences in such matters.³⁸

965 *It appears that Paul intends to treat the unbeliever, who is convinced that a certain practice is idolatry, the same as a weak believer; for his conscience (so that he will not feel he has caused you to stumble) abstain in his presence.*

1 Corinthians 10:30-31

970 *The strong believer should not be slandered when he or she thankfully, glorifyingly, and non-temptingly enjoys God's gifts.*

Colossians 2:16-23

975 *The weak should not judge the strong in the disputable matters. If you have died with Christ to the world, then you should not submit your conscience to the restrictions of the weak. Submit to the commands of Christ rather than those of men which attempt to go beyond those of Christ. The weak may use lifestyle restrictions to make themselves appear wise, but these really do not help in the actual struggle against the old nature.*

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I conclude this section by stating several principles drawn from these passages:

- 985 5. The Gospel of Christ is primary. We must consider the believer as well as the unbeliever in all our actions (1 Corinthians 9:12, 20-22).
6. The strong and weak believers should not judge one another in matters they consider morally questionable, lest they "test God" (Acts 15:10, Colossians 2:16).
- 990 7. The strong in the faith may choose to forego their rights of freedom while in the presence of a weaker brother or misunderstanding unbeliever (1 Corinthians 9:20-22, 10:28).
- 995 8. There is a difference between temptation and offense; to the weaker brother we are called to avoid the former and not necessarily the latter which both Paul and Jesus were recorded to have done (1 Corinthians 8:9, 9:3, & 10:30).

³⁸ Fee 484-5.

CHAPTER 7

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

In the previous chapters we reviewed the primary cause why the social restrictions at NWC were originally implemented (historical) and the two main arguments the College currently appeals to for the continuance of these restrictions. Now we can establish and comment on the ulterior factors that may possibly contribute to the perpetuation of these restrictions.

Psychological and Spiritual Reasons

Sanctification and Self Denial

A sensed need for sanctification has been felt by various people and religious groups throughout history. Lifestyle regulations have been key components of Rabbinic Jewish, Islamic, and fundamental Buddhist and Christian communities for centuries and reflect the human desire to actively do something about our ever-present sinfulness. The desire for sanctification and increased spirituality through self-denial is an old problem for Christians. During the Middle Ages, monastic ideals of self mortification reached their pinnacle of influence within the Christian community. Influenced by Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, practices such as self flagellation, castration, and the observance of Lent were introduced into the Christian church.

A prime example of this stress on self-denial is reflected in the Rule of St. Basil (*circa* AD 330-379) for monastic orders:

1. Entertain no physical pleasures.
2. Fill each day with physical work.
3. Take no profit from your work--all money goes to the poor and sick.
4. Maintain silence,

5. Maintain a devotion to prayer and study.

St. Benedict of Nursia (*circa* AD 480-*circa* 542) accepted St. Basil's Rule and added to it the following points as well:

6. Abide by Abbot rule.
7. Eat no red meat.
8. Consume a strictly regulated diet of food and alcohol to avoid both excessive and insufficient amounts.
9. Maintain poverty.
10. Maintain chastity.
11. Be unquestioningly obedient to your abbot.

NWC cites a healthy discipline of self-denial as a reason for the continuance of their social restrictions.³⁹ However self-denial is a sacrifice which must be actuated by an individual's own heart and not imposed upon them by another Christian in order for true spirituality to occur. NWC seems to be implementing a forced policy of self-denial upon all students, staff, and faculty. This of course can no longer be considered self-denial because it has not originated within the heart of each community member.

Some may respond to this charge by pointing out that students at NWC are there by their own choice. However, what makes NWC's practice even worse is that they use a mild, yet real, form of enticement to draw some students into their sphere of control. They use the commodity of Christian higher education to do this. The leadership of NWC have a serious responsibility to handle the asset of an institution of Christian higher education without using it as leverage to manipulate those desiring to obtain a Christian education.

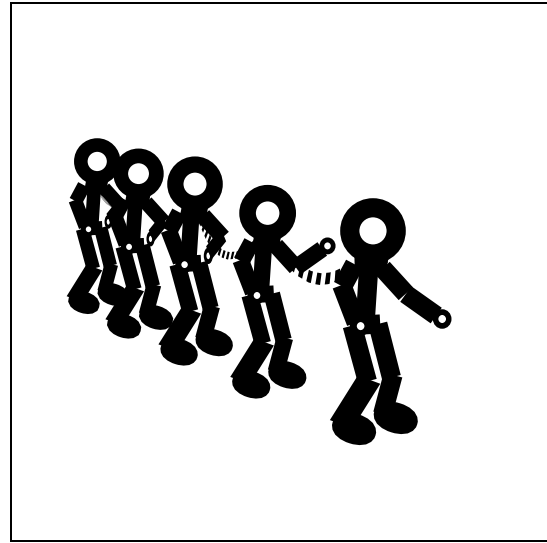
Psychological Implications

The College claims a desire to "honor certain cultural and social customs within an Evangelical framework."⁴⁰ To honor something means to ascribe value to it. Northwestern College's policy communicates a statement to those within its community and those looking in from the outside about what we value. I question, do we want to ascribe value to all opinions

³⁹ 97-98 *Student Handbook*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

within our community (a logical impossibility), or all member's rights to an opinion? For instance, by restricting alcohol, we deny value to the customs of Evangelicals who use wine in communion or drink alcoholic beverages at meals and holidays.



Consequently, NWC policy also intrinsically ascribes value to people outside the community who comply with its standard while it equally denies value to those who do not. This is a very strong form of behavioral conditioning and makes me wonder if the authors of the NWC Guidelines sense a duty to save those whom they believe are spiritually immature from themselves. This

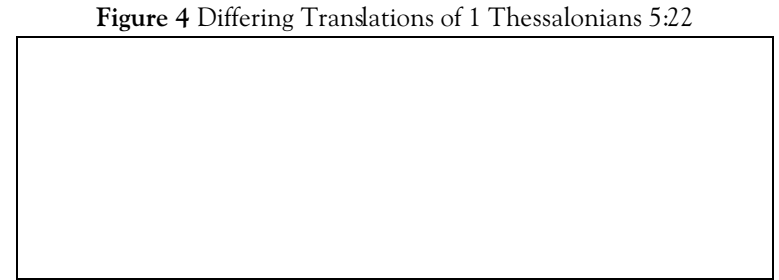
daring assertion would seemingly make them the public safety officers of Christian sanctification.⁴¹

Hermentical and Pseudo-Logical Reasons

Some of the arguments for the restriction of particular practices appear to be illogical, vague, and incomplete. I believe one of the reasons for this incoherency is that the College's original reasons for restricting some

⁴¹ I have heard some people claim that NWC must impose restrictions because some of the students can't be trusted--they're too young and spiritually immature. To that argument I question, are we so bold as to think that the Holy Spirit is unable to do his work of conviction and sanctification without our help? I pray this is not so. We must ask ourselves if we are trusting God or the list?

practices were embedded in historical context and are no longer considered tenable by the school. That is to say that the school's founder, William Bell Riley, and his supporters considered certain of these practices sinful in-and-of themselves. As the school administration gradually softened their stance



on these issues throughout the mid nineteen-hundreds, "lifeboat" excuses for the regulations were constructed in hodgepodge fashion in order to retain the universal restrictions without being embarrassed by the lack of a unified explanation as to why they were still viable rules. A "folk theology," seems to be what remains as a core of the non-biblical traditions of Evangelical Churchianity.

Of these non-biblical traditions, one which has frequently been cited by various Fundamentalists, and was formerly employed by NWC,⁴² involves the King James Version translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil. A common interpretation of this verse would advocate that Christians are not to be involved in any practices that might in any way, by anyone, be construed as possible sin. This is a poor interpretation. Modern versions have avoided this mistake by translating the Greek word *eidos* () as form or kind which denote that we are to avoid sin wherever it is found, not necessarily practices which could be construed as sinful (**Figure 5**). Jesus and Paul certainly did not avoid situations which would have been considered questionable by their Jewish brethren when they fraternized with tax collectors (cf. Mat. 9:10), Samaritans (cf. John 4:9), or gentiles (cf. Acts 15:3); worked on the Sabbath (cf. Mat 12:2); or ate meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Cor 8:8). NWC cannot coherently use 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to argue for a chronologically universal

⁴² See p. 26 of this treatise.

1125 restriction in order to keep community members from participating in
disputable lifestyle practices.

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Part Three: Resolutions

4. Educate the supporting and interested public about the need for a serious policy revision at NWC.
5. Synchronize the Student Development Office's verbal policy with the NWC official published policy.
6. Restrict the jurisdiction of the Community Guidelines to biblically reasonable limits--the geographic boundaries of NWC. A modified policy might read something like the following:

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Abstinence

All members of the College community shall abstain from *all acts of immorality* at all times and in all places, as well as the following while on campus:

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use or possession of

- alcoholic beverages,

- tobacco,

- non-medicinal drugs,

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Participation in all forms of gambling and dancing (excepting campus dramas and musicals).

Consequences

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The potential consequences of making many of these suggested changes are undoubtedly part of the reason they are not being made by the school's present administration. Concern over declines in financial donations and student enrollments due to disgruntled supporters are probably quite high.⁴³ However we must remember that faithfulness to our mission of representing our Heavenly Father to the world is a loftier reward than fiscal success or physical growth. The world is watching Christianity

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⁴³ I have heard various community members question whether donors of large sums to the College have contributed their gifts on the condition of retention of certain portions of the Lifestyle Guidelines. If such a scenario was truly influencing policy, it would be a great shame to our institution. Students would undoubtedly be singing "When a coin in the coffer rings, a Fundamentalist policy at Northwestern springs."

CHAPTER 8

CRITIQUE AND CONCLUSION

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Over the course of this treatise, we have seen how the disputable social restrictions in Northwestern College's Community Lifestyle Guidelines (in their present geographically and chronologically universal jurisdiction) are obstructive to the College's stated Purpose and Mission as well as disobedient to the teaching of the apostle Paul in scripture. We have seen how the school subtly acknowledges the inherent goodness within certain of these disputable practices and have also briefly traced the history of the Fundamentalist movement as well as that of NWC and its founder. We further observed and critiqued the College's appeals to social order and the weaker brother and commented on other possible contributing factors to this problem.

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Practical Steps for Change

At this point, we may examine how NWC can take positive action to fulfill its Purpose and Mission, adhere to the authoritative teaching of scripture, and promote an attitude more conducive to a true Christian spirituality. The following points are recommended to the NWC community:

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1. Seek the face of God in prayer and plead for a revelation of His pleasure for Northwestern College.
2. Call for an arbitration council to be appointed for the investigation of this matter and that its findings be acted upon by the Board of Directors in a speedy fashion.
3. Continue to encourage community members' desire for Christian discernment and spirituality as well as mentor-type accountability.

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and such things as the Admissions department's motto "We're different . . . no apologies!" will become a stench in the nostrils of the community if we continue to make hypocritical claims.

1205 On the other side of the issue, I can testify of knowing several prospective students who have recently considered and decided against attending NWC based not on the strict social guidelines, but because of the blatant hypocrisy breeding at the school. If these suggested changes are truly the direction the Lord desires for us, He will provide a sufficient number of
1210 new donors and students, and in addition, our hearts will be made right before Him. After all, it is only by the grace of God, that we can fully carry out the mission He has designed for NWC and thereby glorify His name before all the peoples of the world. May this end ever be our fervent hope and prayer at Northwestern College.

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