

MYTHS about WINE and ALCOHOL in the BIBLE

Part 1

Compiled by Gary T. Panell

We will be looking at many myths that surround the study of wine and alcohol in the Bible. These myths are being circulated in many Christian churches today. I believe after looking at this detailed study many Christians, who are interested in the truth of God's Word, will come away with a correct understanding of what God says about alcohol.

We will be looking at the myth that says the word 'wine' in the English language has always meant only a fermented drink. We will look at the myth that says the Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible for 'wine' always mean a fermented drink.

We will show that it is just a myth to think that people in Bible times did not know how to preserve grape juice without it fermenting, and that it is a myth that grape juice left to stand, automatically always turns into alcoholic wine on its own. We will also show that people in Bible times did not have to turn their grape juice into alcohol in order to preserve it for long periods of time. And that it is a myth that people could preserve the grape juice easier by fermenting it.

We will show that it is a myth that Jesus made an alcoholic drink for the wedding in Cana. We will disprove the myth that alcohol was used in worship as a drink offering for the Lord in the Tabernacle and the Temple. We will see it for what it is, and that is another myth, which says the Old Testament believers could drink alcoholic wine and have God's approval for this.

We will resolve once and for all that it is a myth that St. Paul encouraged drinking of alcohol when he told Timothy to take some wine for his stomach's sake. Then too, we will prove it is a myth that deacons, deaconesses and elders of the church were told by St. Paul it was alright to drink alcohol just as long as they were not drinking to excess.

We will uncover the reasons why people thought the Disciples of Christ were drunk on the day of Pentecost. We show that it is a myth that Jesus served fermented wine to His twelve Apostles at the Last Supper. We will show that it is a myth that Christians were drunk at the Communion table in Corinth. We will try to answer every question commonly asked about alcohol in the Bible.

We will show that the letters of St. Paul do not say that we can drink alcohol as long as we don't get drunk or don't get drunk too often (as some new versions of the Bible translate), but that we are to abstain from all alcohol in any form. We will prove that the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ taught their followers to be sober as they wait for His return. We will show that God has always hated alcohol and its use not just its abuse!

First, let us look at the myth that says the word 'wine' in the English language has always meant only a fermented drink. Part of this first section was taken from the research done by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi:

Most people assume today that the word "wine" can refer only to fermented, intoxicating grape juice, or to the fermented juice of any fruit used as a beverage. The basis for this assumption is the current definition given to the word by most modern dictionaries.

For example, the seventh edition of the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines "wine" as follows: "1: fermented grape juice containing varying percentages of alcohol together with ethers and esters that give it bouquet and flavor. 2: the usu. fermented juice of a plant product (as a fruit) used as a beverage. 3: something that invigorates or intoxicates."

Note that no mention at all is made in this current definition of unfermented grape juice as one of the possible meanings of "wine." It is not surprising then that people who read a definition such as this, common to most dictionaries, would naturally assume that 'wine' can only mean a fermented juice.

Past Usage of "Wine" This restrictive meaning of "wine" represents, however, a departure from the more classical dual meaning of the word as a designation for both fermented and unfermented grape juice. To verify this fact one needs only to consult some older dictionaries.

For example, the 1955 *Funk & Wagnall's New "Standard" Dictionary of the English Language* defines "wine" as follows: "1. The fermented juice of the grape: in loose language the juice of the grape whether fermented or not."

This definition shows that [not that many] years ago the loose usage of "wine" referred to "the juice of the grape whether fermented or *not*." It is noteworthy that even the more recent *New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* (1971) defines "must" as "Wine or juice pressed from the grapes but not fermented." This definition clearly equates "wine" with grape juice.

The 1896 *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language* which defines "wine" as "the expressed juice of grapes, especially when fermented . . . a beverage . . . prepared from grapes by squeezing out their juice, and (usually) allowing it to ferment." This definition is historically accurate, since it recognizes that the basic meaning of "wine" is "the expressed juice of grapes," which is usually, but not always, allowed to ferment.

"The problem," as Robert Teachout points out, "is that people have taken the very *usual* meaning of the word (whether in Hebrew, Greek, Latin or English)-as an intoxicating beverage-and have made it the *only* definition of the word. That is incorrect scholarship! It is inaccurate both biblically and secularly, and it is inaccurate in the English language historically."

Older English Dictionaries The inaccuracy in the English language becomes even more evident when we look at older English dictionaries. For example, the 1828 *Webster's Dictionary* defines

the word "must" as "*new wine*-wine pressed *from* the grape, but not fermented." Note that the unfermented grape juice is here explicitly called "new wine."

The 1759 Nathan Bailey's *New Universal English Dictionary of Words and of Arts and Sciences* offers the following definition for "wine": "Natural wine is such as it comes from the grape, without any mixture or sophistication. Adulterated wine is that wherein some drug is added to give it strength, fineness, flavor, briskness, or some other qualification." Note that in this definition Bailey does not use the word "fermented," though it is implied in some of the wines he describes.

Bible Translations The above sampling of definitions of "wine" from older English dictionaries suggests that when the King James Version of the Bible was produced (1604-1611) its translators must have understood "wine" to refer to both fermented and unfermented wine.

In view of this fact, the King James Version's uniform translation of the Hebrew *yayin* and Greek *oinos* as "wine" was an acceptable translation at that time, since in those days the term could mean either fermented or unfermented wine, just as the words it translates (*yayin* or *oinos*) can mean either." (You can find all of this information, with foot notes and references on Dr. Bacchiocchi's web site [WINE IN THE BIBLE](#))

I hope this historical lesson has cleared up some questions that you may have had about the word 'wine' in the English language. It is a shame that, today; most of the dictionaries define the word 'wine' as alcohol, considering its historical roots as a 'generic' term.

Maybe we as Christians need to start using the word more correctly and call grape juice, wine. Well, now that I think about it, some of us do that already with the Communion juice. We never serve alcohol in our Communion, but we do call it wine when referring to it sometimes.

Now, we want to shift gears for a little bit and look at the most often used 'reason' given by people who claim the Bible teaches us it is ok to drink alcohol. That's right; they say Jesus made alcohol for a wedding. Then we will look at some other 'reasons' why people say the Bible teaches that it is ok to drink some alcohol. Here are some questions we have received on our web site, Bible-Christian.org and the answers that were given.

Christ's first miracle was the turning of water into wine at the marriage feast. I was always taught that the wine was unfermented. The wine that Lot's daughters drank was fermented, etc.

I guess the bottom line is that I was taught that when it was used in a good way in the Bible it was unfermented, when used in a bad way it was fermented. I believe that Scripture does not contradict itself and that if Jesus turned the water into wine, it must be unfermented, as Jesus knew the Scripture and He would not do anything against it. Can you help? Thanks.

Thank you for the question and it is a good one. You are on the right track, though, and it seems like you just want some proof for what you believe. I believe there is proof, proof that is beyond

a shadow of a doubt! Here is the Scriptural account from the New Kings James Version of the Bible.

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him. 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.'

'Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the water pots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them. 'Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.' And they took it.

'When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew) the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now.' This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (John 2: 1-12)

(The following is paraphrased from an article by Dr. Bacchiocchi, Jesus and Wine. If you want the article with the footnotes and references, please go to his internet site [WINE IN THE BIBLE.](#))

The popular belief that "Jesus was not a teetotaler," but a moderate drinker of fermented wine who even "miraculously manufactured a high-quality (alcoholic) wine at Cana" has no doubt influenced the drinking habits of millions of Christians around the world more than anything else that the Bible says about drinking.

The reason is simple. The example and teachings of Christ are normative for Christian belief and practice. If Christ made, commended and used fermented wine, then there can hardly be anything intrinsically wrong with a moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages! Simply stated, "If wine was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me!"

The belief that the wine Christ provided in Cana was alcoholic rests on five major assumptions. First, it is assumed that the word oinos "wine" indicates only "fermented-quality grape drink, i.e. wine." Second, it is assumed that since the word oinos "wine" is used in reference, both to the wine which ran out and the wine that Christ made, both wines must have been alcoholic.

Third, it is assumed that the Jews did not know how to prevent the fermentation of grape juice; and since, as argued by William Hendriksen, the season of the wedding was just before Spring Passover (cf. John 2:13), that is, six months after the grape harvest, the wine used at Cana had ample time to ferment. Fourth, it is assumed that the description given by the master of the banquet to the wine provided by Christ as "the good wine" means a high-quality alcoholic wine.

Fifth, it is assumed that the expression "well drunk" (John 2:10) used by the master of the banquet indicates that the guests were intoxicated because they had been drinking fermented wine. Consequently, the wine Jesus made must also have been fermented. In view of the importance that these assumptions play in determining the nature of the wine provided by Christ, we shall examine each of them briefly in the order given...

...The Meaning of Oinos... (The first and the second assumption are really based on this mistaken view that oinos, Greek for wine, always is fermented.)* A better acquaintance with the use of the word 'wine,' not only in the Greek language, but also in old English, Latin and Hebrew, would have saved scholars from falling into the mistaken conclusion that oinos means only fermented wine.

The truth of the matter is...oinos [Greek] is a generic term, including all kinds of wine, unfermented and fermented, like yayin in Hebrew and vinum in Latin. Thus, the fact that the wine made by Christ at Cana is called oinos, offers no ground for concluding that it was fermented wine. Its nature must be determined by internal evidence and moral likelihood. The record of the evangelist, as we shall see, affords information for determining this question.

(The first and second assumptions are discredited by two facts.)* First, as mentioned earlier, the word oinos is a generic term referring to fermented and to unfermented wine. Second, the wine provided by Christ is differentiated from the other by being characterized as ton kalon, 'the good' wine. This suggests that the two wines were not identical. The nature of the difference between the two wines will be discussed below.

Preservation of Grape Juice: The third assumption, that it would have been impossible to supply unfermented grape juice for a spring time wedding about six months after vintage, rests on the assumption that the technology for preserving grape juice unfermented was unknown at the time.

The latter assumption is clearly discredited by numerous testimonies from the Roman world of New Testament times describing various methods for preserving grape juice. [This will be discussed in great detail later in this article.]

Preservation of grape juice was in some ways a simpler process than the preservation of fermented wine. Thus, the possibility existed at the wedding of Cana to supply unfermented grape juice near the Passover season, since such a beverage could be kept unfermented throughout the year. [We will give much proof of that fact also later in this article.]

"High-Quality Alcoholic Wine:" The fourth assumption is that the wine Jesus provided was pronounced 'the good wine' (John 2:10) by the master of the banquet, because it was high in alcoholic content. Such an assumption is based on [modern] tastes.

Albert Barnes, a well-know New Testament scholar and commentator, warns in his comment on John 2:10 not to "be deceived by the phrase 'good wine.' The reason, he explains, is that "We use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength, and its power to intoxicate. But no such sense is to be attached to the word here."

To the Roman world of the New Testament times, the best wines were those whose alcoholic potency had been removed by boiling or filtration. Pliny, for example, says that "wines are most beneficial (utilissimum) when all their potency has been removed by the strainer." Similarly, Plutarch points out that wine is "much more pleasant to drink" when it "neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind or passions" because its strength has been removed through frequent filtering.

The wine Christ made was of high quality, not because of its alcohol content, but because, as Henry M. Morris explains, "It was new wine, freshly created! It was not old, decayed wine, as it would have to be if it were intoxicating. There was no time for the fermentation process to break down the structure of its energy-giving sugars into disintegrative alcohols."

It thus was a fitting representation of His glory, and was appropriate to serve as the very first of His great miracles (John 2:11). Rabbinical Witness: The rabbinical witness on the nature of wine is not unanimous. Rabbi Isidore Koplowitz points out in his introduction to his collection of rabbinical statements on wine and strong drink that "it is true that some Talmudic doctors have sanctioned, aye, even recommended the moderate use of wine.

"But it is equally true that many Talmudic Rabbis have in vigorous words condemned the drinking of wine and strong drinks. Some Rabbis have even ascribed the downfall of Israel to wine. An example of disapproval is the statement, often repeated with minor variations by different rabbis, which says: "When wine enters into the system of a person, out goes sense, wherever there is wine there is no understanding."

Elsewhere the Talmud indicates that drinking was forbidden to the accompaniment of musical instruments in festive occasions such as weddings (Sotah 48a; also Mishna Sotah 9, 11). .In the light of these testimonies and considerations we would conclude that the wine provided by Christ was described as "the good wine" because it was not intoxicating.

Moral implications: Another reason leading us to reject the assumption that "the good wine" produced by Christ was high in alcoholic content is the negative reflection such an assumption casts upon the wisdom of the Son of God.

The oinos in this case was grape juice. In the light of the whole Old Testament condemnation of wine [that was fermented], it certainly would appear that the beverage was grape juice."

It is against the principle of Scriptural and moral analogy to suppose that Christ, the Creator of good things (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25,: Col 1:16), would exert His supernatural energy to bring into existence an intoxicating wine which Scripture condemns as "a mocker" and "a brawler" (Proverbs 20:1) and which the Holy Spirit has chosen as the symbol of divine wrath.

Scriptural and moral consistency requires that "the good wine" produced by Christ was fresh, unfermented grape juice. The very adjective used to describe the wine supports this conclusion. "It must be observed," notes Leon C. Field, "that the adjective used to describe the wine made by Christ is not agathos, good, simply, but kalos, that which is morally excellent or befitting. The

term is suggestive of Theophrastus characterization of unintoxicating wine as moral (ethikos) wine.

Referring to the nature of the wine produced by Christ, Ellen White says: "The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which He gave to the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the grape. To this the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new wine 'in the cluster,' and says, 'Destroy it not: for a blessing is in it.'

"The unfermented wine which He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. Its effect was to bring the taste into harmony with a healthful appetite."

"Well Drunk." The final assumption to be examined relates to the expression "well drunk" (John 2:10) used by the banquet master. The full statement reads: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10, KJV).

The assumption is that since the Greek word *methusthosin* "well drunk" indicates drunkenness and since drunkenness is caused, according to the statement of the banquet master, by the "good wine" customarily served first, then "the good wine" provided by Christ must also have been intoxicating, because it is compared with the good wine usually served at the beginning of a feast.

This reasoning misinterprets and misapplies the comment of the master of the banquet, and overlooks the broader usage of the verb. The comment in question was not made in reference to that particular party, but to the general practice among those who hold feasts:

"Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine." (John 2:10, RSV). This remark, as many commentators recognize, forms parts of the stock in trade of a hired banquet master, rather than an actual description of the state of intoxication at a particular party.

Another important consideration is the fact that the Greek verb *methusko* can mean "to drink freely" without any implication of intoxication.

The verb *methusko* in John 2:10 is used in the sense of satiation. It refers simply to the large quantity of wine generally consumed at a feast, without any reference to intoxicating effects.

Those who wish to insist that the wine used at the feast was alcoholic and that Jesus also provided alcoholic wine, though of a better quality, are driven to the conclusion that Jesus provided a large additional quantity of intoxicating wine so that the wedding party could continue its reckless indulgence. Such a conclusion destroys the moral integrity of Christ's character.

The Object of the Miracle: The stated object of the miracle was for Christ to manifest His glory so that His disciples might believe in Him. This objective was accomplished: "This, the first of

His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

Christ's presence at a marriage feast was intended to show divine approval of the marriage institution and of the innocent enjoyments of social life. Yet all of these considerations were subservient to the manifestation of Christ's glory in fulfillment of His Messianic mission.

The glory of God is revealed especially in His act of creation (Psalm 19:1-2). Likewise, Christ's "eternal power and deity" (Romans 1:20) through an act of creation: "He made the water wine [grape juice]" (John 4:46).

The wine of the miracle must have been identical to the wine found in the grape-clusters, because this is the only wine that God produces. "There is not a hint," writes R. A. Torrey, "that the wine He [Christ] made was intoxicating.

"It was fresh-made wine. New-made wine is never intoxicating. It is not intoxicating until sometime after the process of fermentation has set in. Fermentation is a process of decay. There is not a hint that our Lord produced alcohol, which is a product of decay and death. He produced a living wine uncontaminated by fermentation."

"I am satisfied," states William Pettingill, "that there was little resemblance in it [wine made by Christ] to the thing described in the Scripture of God as biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder (Proverbs 23:29-32).

"Doubtless rather it was like the heavenly fruit of the vine that He will drink new with His own in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). No wonder the governor of the wedding feast at Cana pronounced it the best wine kept until the last. Never before had he tasted such wine [grape juice], and never did he taste it again."

Christ's miracles were always directed to benevolent ends. He "came not to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:56). If it were true that Christ miraculously manufactured an intoxicating wine, then that miracle would be a notable exception among His miracles. It would be a malevolent manifestation of His power. He would have manifested shame rather than glory.

Christ was aware of the powerful influence His example would have on contemporary and future generations. If, with all this knowledge He created an intoxicating wine, He would have revealed diabolic rather than divine power and glory. His disciples could hardly have believed in Him, if they had seen Him do a miracle to encourage drunkenness.

[I agree 100 percent with these statements and would like to add to them that: The Bible says Jesus always did the will of the Father who is in heaven. So He would not disobey God the Father, who said by the Holy Spirit:

"Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper." (Proverbs 23:31-32 NKJV)

Also, He would not make people sin by making an alcoholic drink, which we are told not even to look at, let alone drink.

Also, Jesus being God as well as man would know about the harmful effects of alcohol, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and would not give alcohol to a wedding party, which probably included several pregnant women. No, Jesus did NOT make a fermented wine at this wedding. What He did do, was to create and give a wedding gift of at least 120+ gallons of fresh grape juice, thus proving He is the loving Messiah-God, as the theme of St. John points out!]*
Comments by Gary T. Panell

GENERIC WORDS

This section is taken from the research done by William Patton from his book *Bible Wines or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients*.

Professor M. Stuart, in his *Letter to Rev. Dr. Nott*, February 1, 1848, says, page 11: "There are in the Scriptures (Hebrew) but two *generic words* to designate such drinks as may be of an intoxicating nature when fermented and which are not so before fermentation.

"In the Hebrew Scriptures the word *yayin*, in its broadest meaning, designates *grape-juice, or the liquid which the fruit of the vine yields*. This may be new or old, sweet or sour, fermented or unfermented, intoxicating or unintoxicating.

"The simple idea of *grape-juice* or *vine-liquor* is the basis and essence of the word, in whatever connection it may stand. The specific sense which we must often assign to the word arises not from the word itself, but from the connection in which it stands."

He justifies this statement by various examples which illustrate the comprehensive character of the word.

In the London edition (1863) of President E. Nott's *Lectures*, with an introduction by Tayler Lewis, LL.D., Professor of Greek in Union College, and several appendices by F. R. Lees, he says: "Yayin is a generic term, and, when not restricted in its meaning by some word or circumstance, comprehends vinous beverage of every sort, however produced. It is, however, as we have seen, *often* restricted to the fruit of the vine in its natural and unintoxicating state" (p. 68).

Kitto's Cyclopaedia, article Wine: "Yayin in Bible use is a very general term, including every species of wine made from grapes (*oinos ampelinos*), though in later ages it became extended in its application to wine made from other substances."

Rev. Dr. Murphy, Professor of Hebrew at Belfast, Ireland, says: "Yayin denotes all stages of the juice of the grape."

"Yayin (sometimes written yin, yain, or ain) stands for the expressed juice of the grape-the context sometimes indicating whether the juice had undergone or not the process of

fermentation. It's mentioned one hundred and forty-one times." - *Bible Commentary*, Appendix B, p. 412.

[I would like to slip in here a question we often get on a Deuteronomy passage that can be cleared up by an informed understanding of what is being said here. Here is one of many questions we have received on our interactive Bible Discussion web site:

Please explain Deuteronomy 14:26 to me. I have been doing an internet search regarding alcoholic beverage consumption and what the Bible has to say. This one verse has really perplexed me because this is the only time I have seen a possible endorsement of intoxicating liquors in the Bible.

Thanks for asking the question about alcohol and the Bible. The Bible is very clear on this subject; I will give you the "short" answer. The word "wine" in our English Bible does not always mean a fermented drink. The main Hebrew word for "wine" (since the Old Testament was written in Hebrew) is "yayin" (what is pressed out).

The verse you are asking about (Deuteronomy 14:26) is very straight forward. It uses this Hebrew word "yayin" which means "grape juice." Remember that this word is almost always translated as "wine" whether the grape juice is fermented or not. When we think "wine," we always think "fermented," but this is not the case.

The word "wine" in the Bible is a generic term. The context (words before and after the word wine) indicates whether it was fermented or not. For some examples of this, look at Isaiah 65:8. Grape juice is called "wine" when it is still in the grapes on the vine, where it is impossible to be fermented.

So to assume that every time the Bible uses the word "wine" it is talking about a "fermented drink" is not looking at the facts! Another example of this is found in Isaiah 16:10b where it says "...no treaders will tread out wine in their presses..." As soon as the juice was taken out it was called "wine."

Now I would like to finish answering your question on this specific reference, Deuteronomy 14:26. God wanted these believers to tithe on everything, including their fresh grape juice (look at verses 23b and 26). Here God is saying if it is too far to travel from your house to the place of worship with these things, you could sell them right away and take the money instead.

Then when you get there, you can buy the same type of things, fresh grape juice, etc. Then you can rejoice before the Lord. That doesn't mean to get drunk, but to enjoy the food and grape juice you have bought for your family. The New King James Version of the Bible is the best to read when discussing this area of alcohol, it is the most accurate on this subject.

I guess I didn't isolate the part that bothered me. It is the other drink mentioned. The New King James says "wine or similar drink." The Old King James says "wine or strong drink." The Complete Jewish Bible says "wine, other intoxicating liquor." One source I read says the noun in Hebrew means an intoxicating drink.

Where did the New King James get "similar?" I was raised in a Baptist church and never ever heard a word about this verse. Do you disagree with the meaning of the Hebrew word for the other drink mentioned with wine?

Yes, I do stand by the New King James Version translation "wine or other similar drink". I do this for two reasons: first, having been raised in a Baptist church (I myself was an M.K. & P.K.) you will know that one does not make a doctrine out of one verse. The rest of Scripture is very clear on this subject. I hope you had a chance to look at my articles and the other web sites listed there.

Second, the NKJV used the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the Biblia Hebraica, based on the Ben Asher text, while frequent comparisons were made with the Bomberg edition of 1524-25. The Septuagint (Greek) Version of the Old Testament and the Latin Vulgate also were consulted.

In addition to referring to a variety of ancient versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New King James Version draws on the resources of relevant manuscripts from the Dead Sea Caves. You can read more of these quotes from the front of a good NKJV. -Comments by G.T. Panell]

GREEK, LATIN, AND ENGLISH GENERIC WORDS

OINOS .-Biblical scholars are agreed that in the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the word *oinos* corresponds to the Hebrew word *yayin*. Stuart says: "In the New Testament we have oinos, which corresponds exactly to the Hebrew yayin."

As both yayin and oinos are generic words, they designate the juice of the grape in all its stages.

In the Latin we have the word *vinum*, which the lexicon gives as equivalent to oinos of the Greek, and is rendered by the English word wine, both being generic. Here there are four generic words, *yayin*, *oinos*, *vinum*, and *wine*, all expressing the same generic idea, as including all sorts and kinds of the juice of the grape. Wine is generic, just as are the words groceries, hardware, merchandise, fruit, grain, and other words.

Dr. Frederic R. Lees, of England, the author of several learned articles in *Kitto's Cyclopedia*, in which he shows an intimate acquaintance with the ancient languages, says: "In Hebrew, Chaldee, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Latin, and English, the words for wine in all these languages are *originally*, and always, and *inclusively*, applied to the blood of the grape in its primitive and natural condition, as well, subsequently, as to that juice both boiled and fermented."

Dr. Laurie, on the contrary, says: "This word denotes intoxicating wine in some places of Scripture; therefore, it denotes the same in all places of Scripture." This not only begs the whole question, but is strange, very strange logic.

[This is the kind of logic that many, even Evangelical scholars today, use when discussing this area of wine in the Bible. Look what this "Evangelical" Dictionary says: "The only alcoholic

beverage identified by name in the Bible is wine (in the **OT** *yayin* and *tiros*; in the **LXX** and **NT** *oinos*).

"**Another** Hebrew word, *skar*, is translated "strong drink" in the KJV and "beer" in the NIV. No evidence whatsoever exists to support the notion that the wine mentioned in the Bible was unfermented grape juice.

"When juice is referred to, it is not called wine (Genesis 40:11). Nor can "new wine" (*tiros or gleukos*) mean unfermented juice, because the process of chemical change begins almost immediately after pressing.

"The new wine mentioned in Acts 2:13 must have been fermented, because nearly eight months had passed since the last grape harvest. The term correctly signifies the wine made from the first drippings, which had higher sugar content before fermentation and therefore was stronger. In the Bible wine is wine, not grape juice." (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology second edition Edited by Walter A. Elwell*)

Let me just say, this is the standard belief of many Bible 'Scholars' today, even Evangelical 'scholars.' This is too bad, when a person cannot even admit that there is such a thing as grape juice in the Bible.

Believe it or not people today are much like people in those days. Most people do like juices and are not going to give their children alcohol. Well, this is the subject of the rest of the article, so I better let you get into the discussion and decide for yourself. This insert was done by G. T. Panell]

We find the word which denotes the spirit often rendered wind or breath; shall we, therefore, conclude it always means wind or breath, and, with the Sadducees, infer that there is neither angel nor spirit, and that there can be no resurrection?

So, also, because the word translated heaven often means the atmosphere, shall we conclude that it always means atmosphere, and that there is no such place as a heaven where the redeemed will be gathered and where is the throne of God?

But the misery and delusion are that most readers of the Bible, knowing of no other than the present wines of commerce, which are intoxicating, leap to the conclusion, wine is wine [is an intoxicant] all the world over-as the wine of our day is inebriating, therefore the wine mentioned in the Bible was intoxicating, and there was none other.

There is a perverse tendency in the human mind to limit a generic word to a particular species. John Stuart Mill, in his *System of Logic*, says: "A generic term is always liable to become limited to a single species if people have occasion to think and speak of that species [more often] than of anything else contained in the genus. The tide of custom first drifts the word on the shore of a particular meaning, then retires and leaves it there."

The truth of this is seen every day in the way in which the readers of the Bible limit the generic word wine to one of the species under it, and that, an intoxicating wine." (*Bible Wines* William Patton)

This section is by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Andrews University

A major objection to the view that Scripture approves the use of unfermented grape juice is the alleged impossibility in Bible times of preserving grape juice unfermented. Burton Scott states this objection most clearly in his article on "Wine" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: "Unfermented grape juice is a very difficult thing to keep without the aid of modern antiseptic precautions, and its preservation in the warm and not overly-cleanly conditions of ancient Palestine was impossible."

Objective of This Chapter aims at ascertaining whether the preservation of grape juice in its unfermented state was possible or impossible in Bible times. Our investigation will show that the ancients were far more knowledgeable in the art of preserving fruits and wines than generally presumed.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first considers the methods used by the ancients to preserve fruits and wines in general and the second, the methods used to prevent the fermentation of grape juice in particular.

PART I: THE ANCIENT ART OF PRESERVATION

1. The Preservation of Fruits

Amazing Ability There is considerable information regarding the amazing ability of the ancients to preserve fruits and juices. An example is Josephus' account of the Roman capture of the fortress of Masada. He tells us that the fruits and grains the Romans found in the fortress were still fresh, although they had been stored for many years:

"Here was laid up corn in large quantities, and such as would subsist men for a long time; here was also wine and oil in abundance, with all kinds of pulse and dates heaped up together; all which Eleazar found there, when he and his *Sicarii* got possession of the fortress by treachery.

These fruits were also fresh and full ripe, and not inferior to such fruits newly laid in, although they were little short of a hundred years from the laying in (of) these provisions (by Herod), till the place was taken by the Romans; nay, indeed, when the Romans got possession of those fruits that were left, they found them not corrupted all that while: nor should we be mistaken, if we supposed that the air was here the cause of their enduring so long."

Josephus' claim that the Jews in Masada were able to preserve grain and fruits fresh for almost one hundred years is obviously an exaggeration. The statement, however, does suggest that the art of preserving produce was well known to the Jews. Unfortunately Jewish sources do not tell us what such technology was.

Classical Writers Some classical writers, however, do offer us considerable insight into the methods used by ancient people to preserve grains, fruits, vegetables and wines. One of them is Columella, a renowned agriculturalist who lived in the first century A.D. In his treatise *On Agriculture and Trees*, Columella discusses at great length the various methods used by different people to preserve such produce as lettuce, onions, apples, pears, berries, plums, figs, olives, unfermented grape juice and fermented wine.

The Preservation of Grapes Several methods were used for preserving grapes fresh. One of them consisted in cutting the grapes with lengthy branches and sealing the cut with pitch. The grapes were then placed in vessels filled with dry chaff. "In order that the grapes may remain green for as much as a year," Columella explains, "you will keep them in the following manner.

"When you have cut from the vine grapes..., immediately treat their pedicles with hard pitch; then fill a new earthenware pan with the driest possible chaff, which has been sifted that it may be free from dust, and put the grapes upon it. Then cover it with another pan and daub it around with clay mixed with chaff, and then, after arranging the pans in a very dry loft, cover them with dry chaff."

"Other people, according to Columella, preserved grapes by dipping their pedicles into boiling pitch immediately after they were cut, and then placing them in dishes arranged in different layers within a barrel containing boiled-down must. Instead of must, some people used barley-bran to "fill the barrel with alternate strata of bran and grapes. Next they put on the lids and seal them up and store the grapes in a very dry and cool loft.

"Pliny, a Roman scholar and naturalist, contemporary of Columella, briefly describes in his *Natural History* other methods used to preserve grapes: "Some grapes will last all through the winter if the clusters are hung by a string from the ceiling, and others will keep merely in their own natural vigor by being stood in earthenware jars with casks put over them, and packed round with fermenting grape-skins."

Squeezed Grapes The fact that the ancients knew several methods for preserving grapes fresh until the following vintage suggests that unfermented grape juice could be produced at any time of the year simply by squeezing grapes into a cup. This practice is confirmed both in rabbinical and Christian literature.

For example, the *Halakat Gedalat*, the earliest compendium of the Talmud, says: "One may press out a cluster of grapes and pronounce the *kiddush* [blessing pronounced at the consecration of the Sabbath or a festival] over the juice, since the juice of the grape is considered wine in connection with the law of the Nazarite."

The apocryphal *Acts and Martyrdom of Matthew*, a document which circulated in the second and third centuries of the Christian era, attests to the use of freshly pressed juice of grapes in the celebration of the Lord's Supper:

"Bring as an offering the holy bread; and, having pressed three clusters from the vine into a cup, communicate with me, as the Lord Jesus showed us how to offer up when he rose from the dead

on the third day." This is a clear and positive testimony not only of the custom of making grape juice by pressing grapes, but also of using unfermented grape juice in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

There are indications that the practice of pressing preserved grapes directly into the Lord's Supper cup continued for centuries. For example, the third Council of Braga (A.D. 675) reports Cyprian's charge against those "who presented no other wine [*vinum*] at the sacrament of the Lord's cup but what they pressed out of the clusters of grapes."

It is noteworthy that fresh grape juice is called "wine" (*vinum*). The charge was not against the use of unfermented grape juice as such, but rather against the failure to mix the grape juice with water.

The practice of mingling wine with water apparently originated, as Leon C. Field points out, "not necessarily in the weakening of alcoholic wine, but in the thinning of boiled wines and the thick juices of the crushed clusters."

Instruction about this had already been given three centuries before by Pope Julius I (A.D. 337) in a decree which read: "But if necessary let the cluster be pressed into the cup and water mingled with it."

Additional historical testimonies will be given in the following chapter, in conjunction with our study of the communion wine. Such testimonies show that freshly preserved grapes were used throughout the year to make pressed grape juice.

2. The Preservation of Fermented Wine

A Prevailing Misconception It is widely believed that in the ancient world it was much easier to preserve fermented wine than to preserve unfermented grape juice. Such a belief rests on the mistaken assumption that the preservation of fermented wine was a simple process requiring only that the pressed grape juice ferment naturally.

The truth is quite different. Fermented wines are subject to a number of infections which cause them to become acid, malodorous and moldy. The ancients were well aware of these problems.

Pliny, for example, frankly acknowledges that "it is a peculiarity of wine among liquids to go moldy or else to turn into vinegar; and whole volumes of instructions how to remedy this have been published." [It is interesting but while I was writing this article, someone called me and said that a bottle of Champaign (that had never been opened) had been saved for many years from a wedding. When the bottle was finally opened, it was found that it had turned into vinegar.-G. T. Panell]

Columella similarly notes that both fermented wine and unfermented, boiled-down must were subject to spoil: "Boiled-down must, though carefully made, is, like wine, apt to go sour." He goes on saying: "This being so, let us be mindful to preserve our wine with boiled-down must of a year old, the soundness of which has been already tested."

Here Columella indicates that unfermented, boiled-down grape juice, which generally kept better than fermented wine, was used to preserve the latter. Before discussing some of the techniques used in the ancient world to preserve wine, it is important to note how delicate and difficult it was in those days to preserve wine. A major reason was the lack of a precise technology for controlling the fermentation process.

The Discovery of Pasteurization It was in the late nineteenth century that Louis Pasteur, the great French chemist, discovered the cause of fermentation and a remedy for it, known as pasteurization. Pasteur's famous research, *Études sur la bière* (1876), was in fact conducted at the request of beer and wine producers who asked him to find a way to prevent the infections which spoiled their products, causing them enormous financial loss.

This research led Pasteur to discover that fermentation was caused by the multiplication of microorganisms rather than by chemical change. To prevent or control fermentation, Pasteur discovered in 1876 a method known today as "pasteurization," which consists in the destruction of certain bacteria by exposing a liquid (wine, milk, beer) for a period of time to a certain temperature.

Today through pressure boilers, filters, separators, complex refrigeration and pasteurization, the wine industry (known as enology) is able to control the fermentation process. Such a control becomes especially necessary when the must contains too much water and too little sugar because the season has been cold or rainy, or because the grape has grown on moist lands.

In such case, wine makers today correct the imperfect composition of the must by adding to it saccharin substances and by diminishing its water content through artificial evaporation. These modern technical procedures have freed wine growers from the constant fear that their vintage may become spoiled. Without such a technical knowledge and means, ancient wine makers faced the constant risk of losing their vintage.

Problems in Preserving Wine Marcus Porcius Cato (234-150 B.C.), who is considered the father of both Latin prose and literature on agriculture, refers to some of the problems related to the preservation of fermented wine. In chapter 148 of his treatise *On Agriculture*, Cato alludes to such problems when he speaks of the terms "for the sale of wine in jars." One of the conditions was that "only wine which is neither sour nor musty will be sold.

Cato prescribes some precautions to prevent wine from becoming sour or musty: "Divide the grapes gathered each day, after cleaning and drying, equally between the jars. If necessary, add to the new wine a fortieth part of must boiled-down from untrod grapes, or a pound and a half of salt to the culleus [a liquid measure].

If you use marble dust, add one pound to the culleus; mix this with must in a vessel and then pour into the jar. If you use resin, pulverize it thoroughly, three pounds to the culleus of must, place it in a basket, and suspend it in the jar of must; shake the basket often so that the resin may dissolve. When you use boiled must or marble dust or resin, stir frequently for twenty days and press down daily."

In this statement Cato provides quite an insight into the variety of products used to preserve fermented wine: boiled-down must, salt, marble dust, and resin. Later we shall see that Columella mentions other preservatives as well. In spite of the use of such preservatives, problems still developed with fermented wine.

Apparently this treatment did not always prevent wine from turning sour (*asperum*). To sweeten the wine turned bitter, Cato offers this prescription: "Make four pounds of flour from vetch, and mix four cyathi of wine with boiled-down must; make into small bricks and let them soak for a night and a day; then dissolve with wine in the jar, and seal sixty days later." This procedure was to make the wine "sweet" and "of good odor."

The above examples of ancient remedies to cure problems caused by fermenting wine show how mistaken the assumption is that the preservation of fermented wine was a simple process in the ancient world. The sources indicate that the process was far from simple.

The examples cited suffice to show that the preservation of fermented wine in the ancient world was a far more complex process than is generally assumed. In fact, in some places the risk of preserving fermented wine was so great that, as we shall now see, all the vintage was boiled-down and preserved as sweet, unfermented grape juice. ([*WINE IN THE BIBLE: A BIBLICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES*](#), Chapter 4 by Samuele Bacchiocchi - The footnotes have been left out for ease in reading, but these are given on Dr. Bacchiocchi's web site.)

[If a person is not familiar with how grape juice is fermented they might think it just happens automatically without much help from man. This, of course, is not the case! Here is an example of how alcohol is made from grape juice: The essential steps in winemaking can be summarized as follows:

- Extract the flavor and aroma from the base ingredients by chopping, crushing, pressing, boiling or soaking them.
- Add sugar, acid, nutrients, and yeast to the fermentation media or liquor to achieve the proper ratio and ferment, covered, for 3 to 10 days in a primary fermentation vessel (crock, jar or polyethylene pail) at 70-75 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Strain off the liquid from the pulp, put it (the liquid) into a secondary fermentation vessel (a carboy or jug), fit a fermentation trap (airlock) on the mouth of the bottle, and allow fermentation to proceed at 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit until all bubbling ceases (after several weeks).
- Siphon the wine off the sediments (lees) into another clean secondary fermentation vessel. Reattach the fermentation trap. Repeat after another one or two months and again before bottling.
- When wine is clear and all fermentation has stopped, siphon into wine bottles and cork the bottles securely. Leave corked bottles upright for 3-5 days and then store them on their side at 55 degrees Fahrenheit for six months (white wine) to a year (red wine) before sampling. If not up to expectations, allow to age another year or more.

Does this sound like the people in Bible times could just let their grape juice stand and it became alcohol right away? Well, this is what most people believe about wine in the Bible. It could not be further from the truth, and is only a myth!

Now here is how simple it is to preserve grape juice: Put grapes and water (10 pounds of grapes, 1 cup water) in a stew-pan. Heat until stones (seeds) and pulp separate. Then strain through jelly-bag, add (3 pounds) sugar, heat to boiling-point, and bottle. This will make one gallon. When served, it should be diluted one-half with water.

That is it! Which do you think they would rather do in Bible times? I have grapes in my back yard to experiment with. I left some grapes on the vine for nearly two month after they were ripe, and they were good until it began to freeze here. Now I know how to seal the ends of the vines and keep the grape clusters sealed in sand or saw dust for many months longer, and so did people in Bible times know how to do this.

My daughter takes care of a lady who has always made her own grape juice to keep each year. She just boils and seals the juice in a jar without the dregs. My wife's aunt says they have done this same thing for many years. Most people like grape juice that is not fermented or alcoholic. People have known for thousands of years in Israel and around the world how to preserve grape juice! To show this, Dr. Bacchiocchi, documents in detail what they knew in Bible times about the preservation of grape juice.-G. T. Panell]

PART II: THE PRESERVATION OF GRAPE JUICE

Fermentation Process: The ancients were acquainted with the fact of fermentation, even though they did not understand its causes. Just what happens during the conversion of grape juice into wine was not clearly understood until the 1860's, when Louis Pasteur undertook his study of fermentation. The ancients, however, were familiar with some of the methods by which fermentation can be prevented.

Grape juice contains two leading ingredients, glucose or grape sugar and albumen, both of which contribute to the fermentation process. The albumen, which is found in the lining of the skin and in the envelope of the seed of the grape, contains microscopic organisms which are the fermenting agents, known as ferments or yeast.

The decaying of the albumen in the grape juice affords conditions favorable for the multiplication of yeast germs which mix with those already present in the air and release a chemical enzyme capable of breaking down the grape sugar into two forms. One is ethyl alcohol, a colorless liquid that readily mixes with water and remains in solution in the wine. The other is carbon dioxide gas, which appears in tiny bubbles which give the appearance of ebullition.

The process of fermentation occurs only in the presence of certain conditions such as a moderate temperature, moisture and air in the grape juice. Now there are four major methods by which these conditions can be altered or eliminated and thus grape juice be preserved fresh and unfermented. We shall now consider each of these four methods, all of which were known to the ancients.

1. The Preservation of Grape Juice by Boiling

Moisture and Heat The fermentation of grape juice can be prevented by reducing sufficiently its moisture content or by heating the juice at high temperature. The reason for this is that the growth of the yeast germs, which are the fermenting agents, slows or stops entirely when the moisture content of the grape juice is heated at 150° to 180° F. At such a temperature most of the ferments are destroyed. Both of these results are achieved by boiling the grape juice.

By boiling, the water of the grape juice evaporates, yeasts and molds are destroyed, and the sugar content increases, thus inhibiting yeast growth. This method of preserving grape juice unfermented by carefully boiling it down to syrup was commonly and successfully used in the ancient world. When desired, the syrup would be drunk diluted with water. Several sources confirm this practice.

Ancient Testimonies The most celebrated Roman poet, Virgil (70-19 B.C.), in his *Georgics*, pictures a housewife thus "She boils down by the fire the moisture of sweet must, and skims off with leaves the wavy froth of the simmering caldron."

This method was widely used, as indicated by Columella's lengthy description of how to preserve must successfully by boiling it down. "Care should also be taken," he writes, "so that the must, when it has been pressed out, may last well or at any rate keep until it is sold."

To ensure its preservation, Columella explains that "some people put the must in leaden vessels and by boiling reduce it by a quarter, others by a third. There is no doubt that anyone who boiled it down to one-half would be likely to make a better thick form of must."

Safe Preservation When the necessary care was exercised, the boiled grape juice could be safely preserved for a long time. This required lengthy boiling and careful removal of all scum, as Columella explains: "If there is plenty of wood, it is better to boil the must and clear off all the scum with the dregs; if this is done a tenth part will be lost, but the rest keeps good forever." .

Wide Use of Boiled Grape Juice The custom of preserving grape juice by boiling it down into a syrup has survived through the centuries in the Near East and Mediterranean countries. This beverage is known as *vino cotto* (boiled wine) in Italian, *vin cuit* in French, *nardenk* in Syriac and *dibs* in Arabic.

In its article on "Wine," the John Kitto's old but renowned *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature* quotes several nineteenth century historians on the use of boiled grape juice in the Near East. One of them, Dr. A. Russell, in his *Natural History of Aleppo*, writes: "The inspissated juice of the grape, *sapa vini*, called here *dibbs*, is brought to the city in skins, and sold in the public markets; it has much the appearance of coarse honey, is of sweet taste, and in great use among the people of all sorts."

Similarly, Cyrus Redding, in his *History of Modern Wines*, states: "On Mount Libanus, at Kesroan, good wines are made, but they are for the most part *vins cuits* (boiled wines). The wine is preserved in jars." J. D. Paxton, who witnessed a vintage in Lebanon, also says: "The juice that

was extracted when I visited the press was not made into (what is now called) wine, but into what is called *dibs*." The common use of unfermented, "boiled wine" in the Near East during the nineteenth century is also attested by several travel accounts.

Rev. Henry Homes, an American missionary to Constantinople, in his article on wine published in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* (May 1848) gives this account of his observations: "Simple grape-juice, without the addition of any earth to neutralize the acidity, is boiled from four to five hours, so as to reduce it one-fourth the quantity put in.

After the boiling, for preserving it cool, and that it be *less liable to ferment*, it is put into earthen instead of wooden vessels, closely tied over with skin to exclude the air. It ordinarily has not a particle of intoxicating quality, being used freely by both Mohammedans [Muslims] and Christians. Some which I have had on hand for two years has undergone no change."

Boiled Grape Juice among the Jews Several reasons lead us to believe that the boiling process was most probably used also in ancient Israel to preserve grape juice. The art of making and preserving wine was common to Mediterranean countries where viticulture prevailed, and has survived to the present.

There are indications that the ancient Jews preserved wine by boiling it. John Kitto's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature* says: "The Mishna states that the Jews were in the habit of using *boiled wine*. 'They do not boil the wine of the heave-offering, *because it diminishes it*,' and consequently thickens it, thus rendering the mingling of water with it when drunk necessary; but it is immediately added, 'Rabbi Yehudah permits this *because it improves it*' (*Teromoth Perek*)."

In the talmudic treatise entitled '*Abodah Zarah*' there is a lengthy discussion on what some rabbis thought of the use of boiled wine. One of the issues discussed is whether a Jew could use boiled wine which he had handed over for storage to a Gentile. The fear was that the Gentile might have offered it to an idol.

Another issue discussed is whether boiled wine left uncovered became unfit for use. On this issue the renowned Rabbi Hiyya deliberated: "Boiled wine is not rendered unfit by being left uncovered." The reason given in the footnote is that "a snake does not drink it."

The popular notion appears to have been that snakes were fond of fermented wine but did not touch boiled wine. Consequently fermented wine needed to be covered lest it be poisoned by a snake, but boiled grape juice could remain uncovered because snakes would not touch it. These incidental remarks provide an indirect and yet compelling evidence that boiled wine was produced and used by Jews.

Boiled Grape Juice in Ancient Israel? It is hard to tell how extensive the use of boiled wine was in ancient Israel, but there is no reason to doubt that it was used. Some of the Biblical references to "honey- *debash*" could be referring to sweet grape syrup.

The Hebrew *debash* corresponds to the Arabic *dibs*, which is the usual term for a sweet syrup made by boiling down the juice of grapes, raisins or dates. In his article on "honey" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, J. I. Ross writes: "The honey of the Bible was of three different kinds: (a) a thick grape syrup (Arabic *dibs*); (b) wild honey...(c) honey from domesticated bees."

Some scholars maintain that certain Old Testament texts refer not to bee's honey but to grape syrup. For example, in the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, J. A. de Bost states: "Some authors believe that several Old Testament texts, namely Genesis 43:11; Ezekiel 27:17, Jeremiah 41:8 do not refer to bee's honey but to a sweet beverage, a syrup that drips from ripe dates (these are the Hebrew scholars Maimonides, Josephus, Hiller, Celsius, Geddes, etc.)."

They appeal, among other things, to the fact that the Hebrew word *debash*, which means honey, in Arabic has the meaning of dates. Other scholars maintain that the word must be understood as grapes' honey, that is, grape juice boiled with or without sugar until it becomes thick as syrup (Rosenmüller).

This beverage is made even today in Syria and Palestine (Shaw, Russell, and Burckhardt). Kilos of grapes produce 50 kilos of this beverage, called *dibs* (*debash*). It is used instead of sugar, diluting it with water. For the poor it replaces butter and for the sick wine. The Greeks and the Romans knew the honey of grapes."

The account of the spies in Numbers 13 may support the meaning of *debash* as the honey of grapes. The spies "came to the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they brought also some pomegranates and figs" (v. 23).

In front of the fruits which the spies brought back as proof of the fertility of the land, namely, an enormous cluster of grapes with pomegranates and figs, they said: "We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey *debash*], and this is its fruit" (v. 27).

Since the fruits shown to prove that the land flowed with "milk and honey" were especially the incredibly large grapes, "honey" may refer to boiled grape juice, known as "grapes' honey- *dibs*," produced with the kind of grapes displayed, and "milk" may signify the green pastures which nourished the milk-producing cows. The emphasis appears to be on the value of the natural products of the land.

The *Encyclopedia Biblica* notes in this regard that "in later Hebrew certainly, and in OT possibly, *debash* is also used to denote certain artificial preparations made from the juice of various fruits by inspissation, like the modern *dibs*. Reference has already been made to the theory that the 'honey' with which the land of Canaan was said to 'flow' was this inspissated syrup; it has also been held that at least the honey intended for transport (Genesis 43:11; 1 King 14:3) and export (Ezekiel 27:17) must be so understood."

Speaking of grape juice, the article continues, saying: "The early inhabitants of Canaan, however, as Bliss appears to have shown, were certainly acquainted with this manufacture. His

excavations at Tell el-Hesi (Lachish) revealed two wine-presses with apparatus (as he judged) for boiling down the filtered juice (inspissation) into grape syrup."

The preceding observations give us reason to believe that the boiling process was most probably used by the ancient Jews to preserve grape juice unfermented.(please go to Dr. Bacchiocchi's web site *Wine in the Bible* to see the parts that were left out indicated by three dots. and also you can find the references. This information is found under the title: *The Preservation of Grape Juice*.

2. The Preservation of Grape Juice through Filtration.

When the fermentable pulp was pressed out together with the saccharin juice, a separation of the former was still possible by means of filtration. It is evident that the ancient means of filtration were far less sophisticated and efficient than those used by the wine industry today. Their basic method consisted of using a bag, called *sacco*, in which the grapes were placed. A vase was placed below the bag to receive the falling juice. Several Latin writers refer to the use of such strainers or filters in the preparation of wines.

A Biblical Allusion Isaiah 25:6 may contain an allusion to the Biblical custom of filtering the must. The text reads: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow of wine on the lees well refined."

The word "wine" present in the two phrases, "wine on the lees" and "wine on the lees well refined" (RSV), is not found in the Hebrew text. Instead, the Hebrew term used is *shemariam*, which means "preserves," a term which can refer to vintage-produce.

Thus, a more accurate translation would be "a feast of vintage-produce" and "a feast of vintage-produce well cleansed." The Vulgate (Latin) translation respects this meaning: "a feast of vintage-produce (*convivium vindemiae*), a feast of vintage-produce well-cleansed (*vindemiae defaecatae*)."

In this verse God compares the blessings of the Gospel feast to His providing of two festal luxuries: fat things-rich, marrowy meats-and confections such as jellies and syrups. The former would be served in the most savory way and the latter in their purest state.

The "vintage-produce well cleansed" could refer to the filtered grape juice, which on account of its purity and sweetness was regarded, as we have seen, as most pleasant to drink. This harmless nutritious drink fits the emblem of the blessings of salvation which here God promises to all the redeemed.

3. The Preservation of Grape Juice through Cold Storage

Below 40° Fahrenheit The fermentation of grape juice can be prevented also by keeping it below 40° F (4° Celsius). Nearly all processes of fermentation cease at about 40° F. Fermentation is possible only between about 40° and 80° F (4° and 27° Celsius). Below the former point fermentation is inoperative and above the latter point the acetous supplants the vinous process.

By lowering the temperature to about 40° F., the albumen settles at the bottom and the juice does not ferment.

Ancient Method The ancients were familiar with this method of preservation. When they desired to preserve grape juice in its sweet, unfermented state, they would take a *namphora* and coat it with pitch within and without. Then they would fill it with *hmustum lixivi* um-the must that flowed before the grapes would be pressed with a heavy beam-and they would seal it carefully with pitch.

It was then immersed in a pool of cool water or a cistern and allowed to remain undisturbed for six weeks or two months. After this process the grape juice could remain unfermented and hence it was called *semper mustum*, that is, *permanent must*.

We cited earlier a description of this process as given by Columella. To ensure that must remains *semper dulce* "always sweet," Columella prescribes this procedure: "Before the grape-skins are put under the press, take from the vat some of the freshest possible must and put it in a new wine-jar; then daub it over and cover it carefully with pitch that thus no water may be able to get in.

"Then sink the whole flagon in a pool of cold, fresh water so that no part of it is above the surface. Then after forty days, take it out of the water. The must will then keep sweet for as much as a year." Columella goes on to say that "for as long as it is properly cold, so long will it remain in good condition."

In the method described by Columella fermentation was prevented in two ways: (1) by the exclusion of the air, (2) by the reduction of the temperature. The yeast germs are introduced by the action of ordinary air into the fermentable juice. Thus, by placing the grape juice in air-tight wine jars, fermentation was unlikely to occur, especially since the jars were kept in a cold pool.

A similar description of this process is provided by Pliny. Speaking of the sweet wine called *aigleukos* by the Greeks and *semper mustum* "permanent must" by the Romans, he says: "Care is needed for its production, as it must not be allowed to boil [*fervere*, to ferment]-that is the word the Romans used to denote the passage of must into wine.

Consequently, as soon as the must is taken from the vat and put into casks they plunge the casks in water till midwinter passes and regular cold weather sets in."

This method of preserving grape juice must have been in use long before the time of Pliny and Columella, because Cato (234-149 B.C.) mentions it two centuries before them: "If you wish to keep grape juice through the whole year, put the grape juice in an amphora, seal the stopper with pitch, and sink in the pond. Take it out after thirty days; it will remain sweet the whole year."

Gibeon's Wine Cellars It seems reasonable to presume that the Jews knew and used the Roman method of preserving grape juice in air-tight jars, stored in a cold place. The various techniques for making and preserving wine, according to the Roman authors cited earlier, seemed to have

been well known throughout the Mediterranean world. Explicit information about Palestine, however, is lacking.

Some indirect information is provided by James B. Pritchard, who excavated the ancient Gibeon where sixty-three storage wine-vats were found, with a holding capacity of 25,000 gallons. His reconstruction of the process of wine making at Gibeon includes the filtration of the pressed juice into two cylindrical tanks 2 ft. in diameter and 2 ft. deep.

After filtering the wine was stored in cool cellars in large jars sealed with olive oil. Pritchard tested a suggestion of a local wine maker that wine would keep from turning into vinegar in the cellar, if it was sealed with olive oil. The excavators stored a jar of wine sealed with a film of olive oil for a month in the cellars of Gibeon.

To their delight they found at the end of the month that the wine was perfectly preserved. The reason was that the oil provided a practical barrier preventing the oxidation of the wine.

The success of the experiment suggests the possibility that the same method could have been used for preserving unfermented grape juice. Freshly pressed grape juice, after being filtered to eliminate glutinous material, could have been stored in cool cellars in jars sealed with olive oil.

To some extent this method was used by my father when I was a boy. I recall helping him to filter the grape juice through a thick linen sack and then pouring the juice into bottles which were sealed with a film of oil and a tight cork. The bottles would be stored in a cool cellar.

Today, with the availability of bottle caps which seal bottles hermetically, my father follows a simpler procedure. He boils the must and pours it into bottles which he seals immediately with bottle caps pressed tight by a simple machine. He then stores the bottles in a cool cellar.

The frequent linkage in the Old Testament of olive oil and wine may suggest not only the common use of the two products, but also the dependency upon the former to preserve the latter.

4. The Preservation of Grape Juice

Through Sulfur Fumigation

Sulfur Fumigation The fermentation of grape juice can also be prevented by the fumes of sulfur dioxide. The method consists in filling the jars nearly full with fresh unfermented grape juice, then burning sulfur dioxide in the empty portion, and while the sulfur fumes are present, the jars are tightly closed. Another possibility is to pour the must into jars or bottles which have been strongly treated with sulfur fumes. The sulfur absorbs the oxygen of the air and inhibits the formation of yeast germs. Sulfur dioxide is widely used today in the wine industry to deal with some of the infection to which wine is subject.

Ancient Use of Sulfur The use of sulfur to preserve wine was known in the ancient world. In a chapter devoted to various methods used to preserve wine, Pliny speaks of Cato who "mentions sulfur." Horace alludes to this practice in a poem dedicated to the celebration of a glad

anniversary: "This festal day, each time the year revolves, shall draw a well-pitched cork forth from a jar set to drink the smoke in Tullus' consulship." The next stanza suggests that this fumigated wine was unfermented, because a hundred cups of it could be drunk without causing "clamor et ira," that is, "brawls and anger."

The study conducted in this chapter on the ancient methods of preserving both fermented wine and unfermented grape juice should help dispel two major misconceptions [myths]: (1) In the ancient world it was easy to preserve fermented wine because all that it takes is to let the pressed juice ferment naturally; (2) In the ancient world it was impossible to preserve the grape juice unfermented because people had neither the technical knowledge nor the means to prevent fermentation.

We have found that both of these popular notions are unfounded. The problems the ancients encountered in preserving fermented wine were as great as, if not actually greater, than, those faced in preserving unfermented grape juice.

I would like to chime in on the wine discussion. I believe the unfermented wine theory unravels with the pull of a thread. That thread is found when Jesus speaks a parable of wineskins. (This is what someone wrote to us on the subject of the 'parable of wineskins' so let's see what **Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi** says about it.)

Importance of the Saying Christ's allusions to wine in Matthew 9:17 and Luke 5:39 are seen by moderationists as an indication of His approval of the moderate use of alcoholic wine. The first saying occurs in the three parallel passages (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38). The second is found only in Luke 5:39 as an additional statement not found in the narratives of either Matthew or Mark.

Since Luke incorporates both sayings, we shall confine ourselves to the passage as found in Luke, which says: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'the old is good.'" (Luke 5:37-39)

"New Wine": Fermented or Unfermented? The phrase "new wine" (oinos neos) occurs in the New Testament only in this passage and those parallel to it. The question here is the nature of the "new wine." Is it fermented or unfermented? A common view is that it denotes wine recently pressed, but already in a state of active fermentation. Such wine, it is said, could only be safely placed in new wineskins, because they alone were elastic enough to withstand the pressure of the gas-producing fermentation.

This view is expressed, for example, by Jimmy L. Albright in his dissertation on "Wine in the Biblical World." He writes: "The biblical mention of bursting wineskins (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37) shows that gas-producing fermentation took place in the wines produced in Israel, a chemical action that began within a few hours after the pressing of the grapes.

The juice usually had begun to ferment as it stood in the lower pressing vats but was soon poured into jars or into skins...Freshly made wine was put into new wineskins; old skins would burst under the pressure."

In a similar vein R. C. Lenski comments: "When it is fresh, the skin stretches to a degree, but when it is old it becomes stiff and bursts quickly under pressure. People therefore never put new wine, which still ferments and causes pressure, into old, dried-out skins."

This popular interpretation is very imaginative but not factual. Anyone familiar with the pressure caused by the gas-producing fermentation knows that no bottle, whether of skin or glass, can withstand such pressure. Job knew this when he said: "Behold, my heart is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst" (Job 32:19).

The Encyclopedia Biblica acknowledges this fact, saying: "It is impossible that the must could ever have been put into skins to undergo the whole process of fermentation, as is usually stated, the action of the gas given off in the early stages of the process being much too violent for any skins to withstand. Where a large quantity of grapes had to be trodden, it was necessary to relieve the wine vat by transferring the must immediately to earthenware jars, of which the Jews possessed a large variety."

Unfermented Grape Juice "The difficulty connected with this parabolic word," as Alexander B. Bruce rightly points out, "is not critical or exegetical, but scientific. The question has been raised: could even new, tough skins stand the process of fermentation?"

The answer is obviously negative. Thus, Bruce himself suggests that "Jesus was not thinking at all of fermented, intoxicating wine, but of 'must,' a non-intoxicating beverage, which could be kept safely in new leather bottles, but not in old skins which had previously contained ordinary wine, because particles of albuminoid matter adhering to the skin would set up fermentation and develop gas with an enormous pressure."

Some argue that the "new wine" spoken of must have been "a new wine which had not fully fermented, but which had come so near the completion of that process that it could with safety be put into new skins, whose elasticity would be sufficient to resist the 'after-fermentation' which would ensue." The weakness of this hypothesis is twofold.

First, wine which was near the completion of the process of fermentation could have safely been stored in old wineskins as well, because the neck opening would have provided an adequate release for the remaining fermenting gas. Second, the fermentation process, when permitted, was carried on not in wineskins, but in large jars, known as *habith* in Hebrew and *dolium* to the Romans.

The only "new wine" which could be stored safely in new wineskins was unfermented must, after it had been filtered or boiled. The skin would be prepared like the amphora, by smearing it with honey or pitch, and after the must was poured in, it would be tightly closed and sealed.

The reason that a new skin was required for new wine is that an old skin would almost inevitably have, as Lees and Burns explain, "some of the decayed albuminous matter adhering to their sides." This would cause the new wine to ferment. On the other hand, if new wineskins were used to store unfermented new wine, no fermentation-causing agents would be present in the skins themselves. Thus, the wine would be preserved from fermentation and the wineskins from rupture.

A Pagan Testimony It is significant to note in this regard that Columella, the renowned Roman agriculturist who was a contemporary of the apostles, emphasizes the need to use a new amphora to preserve fresh must unfermented: "That must may remain always sweet as though it were fresh, do as follows.

"Before the grape-skins are put under the press, take from the vat some of the freshest possible must and put it in a new wine-jar [amphoram novam], then daub it over and cover it carefully with pitch that thus no water may be able to get in. Then sink the whole flagon in a pool of cold, fresh water so that no part of it is above the surface. Then after forty days, take it out of the water. The must will then keep sweet for as much as a year."

A similar method was used with new wineskins, which were prepared, like the amphora, by being smeared with honey and pitch, and after being filled with must, were sealed and buried in the earth.

Any of the processes described in the previous chapter, such as filtration, boiling, exclusion of air, sulfur fumigation, and reduction of the temperature below 40° F. (4° Celsius), would have been counted on to ensure the preservation of the new wine unfermented in new wineskins. Any two or all of these methods could be combined to ensure the prevention of fermentation.

The Meaning of the Saying This interpretation is further confirmed by the symbolic meaning of Christ's saying. The imagery of new wine in new wineskins is an object lesson in regeneration. As fittingly explained by Ernest Gordon, "The old wineskins, with their alcoholic lees, represented the Pharisees' corrupt nature.

The new wine of the Gospel could not be put into them. They would ferment it. 'I came not to call the self-righteous but repentant sinners.' The latter by their conversion become new vessels, able to retain the new wine without spoiling it (Mark 2:15-17, 22). So, by comparing intoxicating wine with degenerate Pharisaism, Christ clearly intimated what his opinion of intoxicating wine was."

"It is well to notice," Ernest Gordon continues, "how in this casual illustration, he [Christ] identifies wine altogether with unfermented wine. Fermented wine is given no recognition. It could be put into any kind of wineskin, however sorry and corrupt.

But new wine is like new cloth, which is too good to be used in patching rags. It is a thing clean and wholesome, demanding a clean container. The natural way in which this illustration is used suggests at least a general, matter-of-fact understanding among his Jewish hearers that the real fruit of the vine, the good wine, was unfermented."

IS OLD WINE BETTER?

Importance of the Saying In Luke Christ's saying about new wine in fresh wineskins is followed by a similar and yet different statement: "And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good'" (Luke 5:39). Though this statement is not found in the other Gospels, it forms an integral part of the narrative.

Moderationists attach fundamental importance to this statement because it contains, in their view, Christ's outspoken commendation of alcoholic wine. Kenneth L. Gentry, for example, speaks of "the well-nigh universal prevalence of men to prefer old (fermented) wine over new (pre- or unfermented) wine. The Lord himself makes reference to this assessment among men in Luke 5:39: 'And no one, after drinking old wine, wishes for new; for he says, The old is good enough.'"

Everett Tilson sees Luke 5:39 as one of the most challenging texts against those who favor abstinence. He writes: "This attempt to defend Jesus' preference for the 'new' [unfermented] to the 'old' [fermented] wine falls victim to the passage in Luke 5:39, long one of the most difficult passages for biblical literalists who favor abstinence.

Without a word of criticism, as if expressing a truism with which he himself agrees, Luke records Jesus as saying: 'And no one after drinking old wine desires new.' Why? 'The old is good,' he answers (5:39)-though far more likely to be both fermented and intoxicating!"

Meaning of "New Wine" The first question to address in our study of this passage is whether the "new wine" here has the same meaning as in the two preceding verses. Some think it does not. They see the "new wine" of verse 38 as being wine not fully fermented and that of verse 39 as fully fermented wine but without the mellowness which comes with age. Lees and Burns, the authors of *The Temperance Bible-Commentary*, favor the view that the "new wine" of verse 38 is "identical in nature, and representative of the same Christian blessings, with the 'old wine' of verse 39-being the new preserved and improved by age."

The meaning of "new wine" in this passage cannot be determined by its general usage in Scripture because in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), the phrase *oinos neo s*- "new wine" is used to translate both fermented wine as in Job 32:19 and unfermented grape juice as in Isaiah 49:26. In the latter it translates the Hebrew *asis* which designates unfermented grape juice.

In the passage under consideration it is legitimate to infer that "new wine" has the same meaning in the whole passage, because it is used consecutively without any intimation of change of meaning. The metaphors in both sayings are used without confusion or contradiction. This means that if the "new wine" of verse 38 is, as shown earlier, unfermented grape juice, the same must be true of the "new wine" of verse 39.

Meaning of "Old Wine" Before discussing whether or not Christ expressed a judgment on the superior quality of "old wine" over "new wine," it is important to determine whether the "old

wine" spoken of is fermented or unfermented. From the viewpoint of quality, age "improves" the flavor not only of fermented wine but also of unfermented grape juice.

Though no chemical change occurs, grape juice acquires a finer flavor by being kept, as its fine and subtle particles separate from the albuminous matter and other sedimentations. Thus, the "old wine" esteemed good could refer to grape juice preserved and improved by age.

The context, however, favors the meaning of fermented wine, since Christ uses the metaphor of the "old wine" to represent the old forms of religion and the "new wine" the new form of religious life He taught and inaugurated. In this context, fermented old wine better represents the corrupted forms of the old Pharisaic religion.

Is "Old Wine" Better? In the light of this conclusion, it remains to be determined if Christ by this saying is expressing a value judgment on the superiority of "old [fermented] wine" over "new wine." A careful reading of the text indicates that the one who says "The old is good" is not Christ but anyone who has been drinking "old wine."

In other words, Christ is not uttering His own opinion, but the opinion of those who have acquired a taste for the old wine. He says simply that anyone who has acquired a taste for old wine does not care for new. We know this to be the case. Drinking alcoholic beverages begets an appetite for stimulants and not for alcohol-free juices.

Christ's saying does not represent His judgment regarding the superiority of old, fermented wine. Several commentators emphasize this point. In his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Norval Geldenhuys says: "The point at issue here has nothing to do with the comparative merits of old and new wine, but refers to the predilection for old wine in the case of those who are accustomed to drink it."

The same point is emphasized by Henry Alford in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke. He says: "Observe that there is no objective comparison whatever here between old and new wine; the whole stress is on desireth [desires] and for he saith [says], and the import of better is subjective: in the view of him who utters it."

R. C. H. Lenski states the same truth most concisely: "It is not Jesus who calls the old wine 'good enough,' but he that drank it. A lot of old wine is decidedly bad because it has not been prepared properly; age is one thing, excellence with age quite another."

In a similar vein, Dr. Jack Van Impe writes: "Does not Jesus say [in Luke 5:39] that old wine is better? Not at all. He simply says that one who has been drinking old wine says it is better. This shows the Lord's understanding of the habit-forming effect of beverage alcohol.

His statement stands true today. Try to sell grape juice on skid row and you will probably have no takers. Those who drink old wine (intoxicating wine) prefer it. They are hooked on it. . . . The secondary message of the parable, then, actually argues for the superiority of new (unfermented) wine, using it as a picture of salvation."

The Context of the "Old Wine" The view that old, fermented wine is better than new wine, would be false even if everyone on earth believed it! And in the passage we are considering is contradicted by the context in which it occurs and by the whole purpose of the illustration.

In the immediate context Jesus uses the same word (*palaios*) of old garments, which He obviously did not esteem as better than new ones. The statement about "old wine" seems to contradict the preceding one about "old garment," but the contradiction disappears when one understands the purpose of the illustration.

In his article on "oinos" ("Wine") in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament , Heinrich Seeseman notes the apparent contradiction and the significance of the context: "Luke 5:39 seems to contradict what goes before, since it favors the retention of the old. In the context of Luke, however, it is regarded as a warning against over-estimation of the old."

The purpose of the illustration is not to praise the superiority of old wine but to warn against an over-estimation of the old forms of religiosity promoted by the Pharisees. Such religiosity consisted, as verse 33 indicates, in the fulfillment of such external ascetic practices as frequent fasting and public prayer.

To justify the fact that His disciples did not adhere to such external forms of religiosity, Christ used four illustrations: wedding guests do not fast in the presence of the bridegroom (vv. 34-35); new cloth is not used to patch an old garment (v. 36); new wine is not placed in old wineskins (vv. 37-38); new wine is not liked by those accustomed to drink the old (v. 39).

The common purpose of all the four illustrations is to help people accustomed to the old forms of religion, and unacquainted with the new form of religious life taught by Christ, to recognize that the old seems good only so long as one is not accustomed to the new, which in and of itself is better.

In this context, the old fermented wine seems good only to those who do not know the better new wine. In his book *Alcohol and the Bible*, Stephen Reynolds perceptively points out the broader implications of Christ's illustration about the old wine.

He says: "Christ warns against the over-estimation of Pharisaism (old wine), but the figure of speech carries with it more than the thought that the Gospel should be regarded more highly than Pharisaism. It also strongly suggests that to those who are perceptive of truth, new wine (unfermented grape juice) is preferable to old (intoxicating) wine. Only the natural man with corrupted taste thinks otherwise."

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