

Wines: Ancient and Modern

or

Bible Wines Misunderstood

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
What Will Be Considered	2
Evidence of Ancient Writers	2
Boiled, Concentrated Wines	3
The Use of Sulfur.....	3
Air Tight Containers	4
Filtration to Preserve Wine	4
Preservation by Low Temperature.....	5
Preservation Settling.....	5
Chemistry of Fermentation	5
Hot Climate & Fermentation	6
“Sweet Tooth”	6
Fermentation Destroys Sweetness	6
Our Cultural Acceptance of Alcohol.....	7
Scriptural Evidence.....	8
Distillation & Strong Drinks.....	9
Wine in Context	9
New Wine in Old Bottles.....	10
Jesus: a Wine Bibber?.....	10
The Lord’s Supper	11
Good for the Stomach.....	13
Drunkards at Pentecost	13
Temperance as a Virtue.....	13
Modern Counsel to the Lord’s People	13
Conclusion	14

Wines—Ancient & Modern

by Frank Evan Frye

Introduction

Wine and its use have been hot topics of discussion for centuries. The very meaning of the word “wine” in the English language has been controversial since the Bible was first translated into this language. The question is, “Was the wine of Bible times the same as the wine which is commonly consumed today?”

It must be remembered that when the King James Bible was translated in 1611, the consumption of alcoholic beverages was nearly universal. There was apparently no effort to distinguish between the different types of wine which were found in the text of the Scriptures. In addition to this, it would be impossible to say how much the translators and interpreters of the modern versions of the Bible have been influenced by either the fear of being rejected by those who use alcohol or by the desire to justify their own use of alcohol.

The word “wine” has several different meanings in English. This is also true for the words in Hebrew and Greek which have been translated as “wine” into the English. In some instances even in the Hebrew and Greek, they do not remain consistent with their normal usage.

It has been presumed by many people that since the ancients did not have modern refrigeration or the techniques of canning that are known today, that it must have been impossible to prevent fermentation of wines. This only demonstrates the bias of the last several generations and sheds no light on the little known facts of the past.

It is the purpose of this small booklet to bring to the fore information which, although not

new, has not been readily taught for many years.

Our home dictionary (*Webster's New World */ Dictionary of the American Language, 1957*) has six different meanings for the word wine. Not one of them even hints at the possibility of a wine that is non-alcoholic. In my Bible Dictionary (*Peloubet's Bible Dictionary, 1947*) this statement is made:

No unfermented wine is now known in Palestine, and there is no evidence of its use at any time. The fermentation of wine was not at all considered a similar substance to the leaven of bread, and was not at any time prohibited to the Jews. —p. 738

After examining the writings of many ancient historians, it is my conviction that the above statement is not only misleading but wholly false in every part. The testimony of ancient writers (including the writers of the Bible) is that there were two very distinct kinds of wine which were made and consumed. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two types of wine. However, in general, one is described as the cause of much evil, violence, and destruction. It is pictured as poisonous, the cause of madness and as the symbol of ruin and God's eternal punishment.

The character of the other kind of wine is exactly opposite. This kind of wine is described as a blessing to men, both physically and spiritually. It is the symbol of the blood of Christ which atones for the sins of the world. It has no such character as to cause madness or bring a person to physical and spiritual ruin.

The one kind of wine is the constant subject of warning and condemnation while the other is esteemed as innocent and refreshing.

It is freely admitted that the ancients did use alcoholic beverages. These are described in the Bible and in other ancient writings. What is not commonly known today, whether by a cultural bias or by a collective amnesia, is that the ancients *did* know how to preserve the juice of grapes and of other fruits for long periods of time (many years) without fermentation, and that these were also referred to as wine.

The word "wine" is a generic term just as the juice of the apple is called cider—whether it has been fermented or not. This is true in the Spanish language also. "*Sidra*" can mean the juice of the apple in either state. It is, however, much more easy in Mexico to find *sidra* which has been fermented.

It will become obvious that this writer does have a bias. It is not however, based on lack of information. Everyone works from a bias viewpoint. No one is unbiased. One such biased position is to reject the inspiration of the Word of God. Another bias would be to accept the inspiration of God's Word. (This reflects the author's viewpoint.) An important part of the question under consideration is that of the inspiration and thus the consistency of the Word of God.

What Will Be Considered

1. Examine the writings of the ancient Romans, Greeks and Hebrews regarding their "wines."
2. Examine the laws of chemistry and of fermentation.
3. Examine the nature of the climate and how this affects the fermentation of sweet juices.
4. Examine our own cultural bias about sweet things and alcoholic beverages and compare this with the customs of ancient times.
5. Examine the Scriptures (both ancient and modern) regarding the use of "wine" and "strong drinks."
6. Conclusion.

Evidence of Ancient Writers

One of the most startling discoveries that this writer made was that there are several different ways by which sweet unfermented juices can be preserved for long periods of time. Some of these ways are so simple that it is surprising and one has the tendency to say "I knew that." There seems to be a kind of cultural amnesia in which we have forgotten only certain things which could be used to justify a certain type of life-style.

There were essentially six methods by which the ancients could have prevented the fermentation of grape juice. Some of these methods were used in combination with each other.

1. If grape juice is boiled down into a thick syrup, it will never ferment. By simply adding water, the juice can be reconstituted.
2. By the addition of the fumes of burning sulfur, or materials which contain sulfur fermentation can be prevented.
3. Grape juice will not ferment if it is sealed in some way from the air.
4. Filtration to remove the yeast and other impurities was used to prevent fermentation.
5. By lowering the temperature of the grape juice the ancients knew that fermentation could be prevented.
6. Subsidence or allowing the yeast to settle to the bottom while the sweet juice is kept cool was also practiced. The pure juice was then separated from the yeast on the bottom by pouring, dipping or siphoning.

The following is a collection of a few references to antiquity wherein these methods were used.

Boiled, Concentrated Wines

The process of concentrating sweet juices by boiling or evaporation is quite simple. By doing this the sugar concentration of the liquid becomes quite high and this kills any yeast or bacteria which might be present. (The yeast or bacteria are killed by osmosis which dehydrates them in the presence of a sugar of high concentration.) In this state grape juice will no more ferment than molasses or honey. It can be kept for years with no special care, and simply reconstituted with water for use. The author used a double boiler to keep the juice from scorching and has kept several samples now for over ten months in unsealed jars. The merit of using concentrates of this type becomes immediately apparent when it is realized that the bulk and weight of the wine is greatly reduced. This would have made it much easier for storing (size of the container) and for transportation (both size and weight of the container). So the commercial value of this type of wine is easily understood.

The Mishna states that the Jews were in the habit of using boiled wine. —Kitto, vol. 2, p. 477

Aristotle who was born 384 B.C. is on record as saying:

The wine of Arcadia was so thick that it was necessary to scrape it from the skin bottles in which it was contained, and to dissolve the scrapings in water.

Horace, who was born 65 B.C. states:

There is no wine sweeter to drink than Lesbian; that it was like nectar, and more resembled ambrosia than wine; that it was perfectly harmless, and would not produce intoxication.

Adam's *Roman Antiquities*, first published in Edinburgh, 1791, on the authority of Pliny and Virgil, says:

In order to make wine keep, they used to boil (*deconquere*) the *must* [fresh grape-juice] down to one-half, when it was called *defrutum*, to one-third, *sapa*.

Homer in his *Odyssey*, (book 9) tells us that Ulysses took in his boat:

a goat-skin of sweet black wine, a divine drink, which Marion, the priest of Apollo, had given him—it was sweet as honey—it was imperishable, or would keep for ever; that when it was drunk, it was **diluted with twenty parts water**, and that from it a sweet and divine odor exhaled.

Athenæus states that the Tæniotic has such a degree of richness or fatness that when **mixed with water** it seemed gradually to be diluted, much in the same way as Attic honey well mixed.

Some of the celebrated Opimian wine mentioned by Pliny had, in his day, two centuries after its production, the **consistence of honey**.

—*Bible Wines*, p. 27

The Use of Sulfur

The use of sulfur in its various different forms was known to prevent the fermentation of sweet juices in ancient times. It is doubtful that it was even understood that some of the substances used contained sulfur or why they worked, but the effect was the same.

It was known that if the fumes of burning sulfur (sulfur dioxide) were allowed to dissolve in a fresh sweet juice that the tendency to ferment was halted. The combination of sulfur dioxide with water produces a weak acid called sulfurous acid which is a good preservative and is still used today in commercially canned grape-juice.

Adams in his *Roman Antiquities*, on the authority of Pliny and others, says "that the Romans fumigated their wines with the fumes of sulfur; that they also mixed with the *mustum* [fresh sweet grape juice], newly pressed juice, yolks of eggs, and other articles containing sulfur. When thus

defæcabantur (from *defæcto*, 'to cleanse from the dregs, to strain through a strainer, refine, purify, defecate'), it was poured (*diffusum*) into smaller vessels or casks covered over with pitch, and bunged or stopped up." —*Bible Wines*, p. 39

In Horace, (liber. iii. ode viii. line 9 we read:

'This day, sacred in the revolving year, shall remove the cork fastened with pitch from that jar which was set to fumigate in the consulship of Tullus. Take, my Mæcenas, **an hundred glasses**, on account of the safety of your friend, and continue the wakeful lamps even to daylight: all clamor and passion be far away.'

This Horace calls wine—it was fumigated—the amphora [wine bottle made from fired clay] was corked and fastened with pitch, and that *an hundred glasses might be drunk without clamor or passion*.

—*Bible Wines*, p. 43

Air Tight Containers

Did the ancients know how to make an air tight container? Another myth is that this kind of technology was unknown in ancient times. In *Greek and Roman Antiquities*, Smith states the following:

When it was desired to preserve a quantity in the sweet state, an amphora was taken and coated with pitch within and without, it was filled with *mustum lixivium* [fresh grape juice], and corked so as to be perfectly air-tight. It was then immersed in a tank of cold fresh water, or buried in wet sand, and allowed to remain for six weeks or two months. The contents, after this process, was found to remain unchanged for a year, and hence the name, *ægleukos*—that is, 'semper mustum,' always sweet.

—*Bible Wines*, p. 48

Here the Romans utilized two of the methods to preserve wine without fermentation. They carefully prepared the containers to make them air tight and then after sealing the juice inside, they kept it cool for an extended period of time after which they said that it would be permanently preserved.

Columella describes a process in which the sweet grape juice is covered with oil which isolates it from the air.

To about ninety pints of the best *must* [sweet grape juice] in a barrel, eighty pounds of oil are to be added, and a small bag of spices sunk to the place where the oil and wine meet; the oil to be poured off in the ninth day. The spices in the bag are to be pounded and replaced, filling up the cask with another eighty pounds of oil; this oil to be drawn off after seven days. —*Bible Commentary*, p. 297

Filtration to Preserve Wine

When grapes are squeezed and their juice is drawn off, there is sufficient yeast in it to cause fermentation. It is unknown when this process and the others herein discussed were first discovered, but they are described in detail by many different ancient writers. In his *Symposium*, Plutarch (born A.D. 60) gives this description:

Wine is rendered old or feeble in strength when it is frequently filtered. The strength or spirit being thus excluded, the wine *neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind and the passions, and is much more pleasant to drink*.

—*Bible Commentary*, p. 278

Pliny the Roman historian in liber xxiii. cap. 24, says:

The most useful wine has all its force or strength broken by the filter. —*Bible Commentary*, p. 168

It is understood that the "force" or "spirit" or "strength" of wine that inflames the brain, etc. is alcohol. It is also clear that by straining it the formation of alcohol is prevented by the removal of the yeast. Pliny makes the interesting observation that this wine that has no "force" or "strength" is "*the most useful*." Plutarch states that it is "much more pleasant to drink." How is it that these very clear observations by the scholars of the past have been so hidden from the educated of our present generation?

Preservation by Low Temperature

Again, Pliny the Roman historian in liber xiv. c. 9 gives a description of how to produce “agleuces” or a wine which is “always sweet.”

They plunge the casks, immediately after they are filled from the vat, into water, until winter has passed away and the wine has acquired the habit of being cold. —Kitto, ii. 955

Preservation Settling

When sweet grape juice is kept below 45° F. fermentation is halted. If the container is left undisturbed for a period of several weeks below this temperature, the yeast will settle to the bottom of the container. It is then possible to draw off the clear sweet juice which will keep for a long period of time without fermenting. If properly stored, it will last for more than a year. Columella describes the process:

Gather the grapes and expose them for three days to the sun; on the fourth, at mid-day, tread them; take the *mustum lixivium*; that juice which flows into the lake before you use the press, and when it has settled, add one ounce of powdered iris; strain the wine from its fæces, and pour it into a vessel. *This wine* will be sweet, firm or durable, and healthy to the body. —Nott, London Ed. p. 213

In this recipe we notice several preservation methods being utilized. First, the purest juice which flows out of the press before any pressure is applied is used. Second, it is allowed to settle. Third, a powdered herb is added and last it is strained or filtered.

Again Columella describes how to preserve sweet unfermented wine which will last one year:

That your *must* [sweet grape juice] may always be as sweet as when it is new, thus proceed: Before you apply the press to the fruit, take the newest *must* from the lake, put into a new amphora, bung it up, and cover it very carefully with pitch, lest any water should enter; then immerse it in a cistern

or pond of pure cold water, and allow no part of the amphora to remain above the surface. After forty days, take it out, and it will remain sweet for a year. —Columella, liber xii. cap. 29

Professor Charles Anthon gives the same recipe in his *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

William Patton explains this passage as follows:

We here notice: 1, that the newest—the unfermented juice—is taken; 2, it is put in a *new* amphora or jar free from all ferment from former use; 3, the air is perfectly excluded; 4, it is immersed in cold water for forty days. Being below 45°, fermentation could not commence. Thus there was ample time for the gluten [yeast] to settle at the bottom, thus leaving the juice pure and sweet.

—*Bible Wines*, p. 38

Chemistry of Fermentation

The laws of chemistry, even though not fully understood, operated the same in antiquity as today. The conditions which are necessary for fermentation and conversely to prevent fermentation are well understood today. The surprising thing to most people is that the Romans, the Greeks and the Hebrews had a fairly good understanding of these principles. Fermentation requires several things to take place:

1. Yeast must be present (some ancient writers called it “gluten”). Too much or too little yeast is unfavorable to the process.
2. Sugar in some form is needed to be acted upon by the yeast. The sugar is converted into grain alcohol. Today this kind of alcohol is called ethyl alcohol or ethanol.
3. The concentration of the sugar must be within an acceptable range. If there is too much sugar the process will favor “acetous” fermentation. If the concentration of sugar reaches the syrup stage, the yeast and bacteria

will be killed and no fermentation will take place. Honey and thick syrups fall in this category. If the sugar concentration is too low the wine will not keep because the “**vinous**” fermentation will be immediately followed by “**acetous**” fermentation. (Vinous fermentation produces alcohol while acetous fermentation produces acetic acid which is the sour acid in vinegar.)

4. Finally the temperature must be regulated between 50° F. and 75° F. If the temperature falls below 50° F. the fermentation process slows and stops. If the temperature exceeds 75° F. “vinous” fermentation is almost immediately followed by “acetous” fermentation. This second fermentation is not caused by yeast, but by bacteria. This step converts the alcoholic wine into *vinegar* (*sour* wine).

Hot Climate & Fermentation

A cool growing season will normally produce inferior fruit in that it will not reach its maximum sugar content. However, hot climates are known to produce many fruits and food-stuffs which are high in sugar content. Sugar cane requires a hot climate to do its best. The same is true for pineapple, peaches, melons and grapes.

Palestine is known to have a hot climate. The grapes that are grown there are “exceedingly sweet.” (*Anti-Bacchus*, p. 203) Since the temperature hovers near 100° F. in Palestine during the time of the vintage, and the grapes have a high sugar content, the juice that would be produced would have a natural tendency to turn into vinegar and not into alcoholic wine.

“Sweet Tooth”

Sour, bitter, salty, and sweet are all tastes which we experience every day. Sweet is the one taste around which the economies of the

world revolve. “Sweet” is a part of our language which is used to describe the good things of life. It is a taste which is readily accepted by tiny babies, while sour will cause a grimace on nearly anyone’s face. The song from the movie “Mary Poppins” which is entitled “A Spoonful of Sugar” is a good example of how the sweet taste has been used to make even bad-tasting medicine more palatable. Today the soft drink and “junk food” industry makes billions of dollars on the world’s sweet tooth. When the dangers of the overuse of refined sugars became apparent, artificial sweeteners became popular. Ours is the generation of *Kool-Aide*, *Pepsi*, and diet drinks. Anything to satisfy the desire for sweets!

On the other hand, alcohol has a wholly acquired taste. It is universally found to be repulsive when it is tasted for the first time. One need only watch the face of a person who first tries a drink to verify that. William Patton aptly states:

I do therefore most earnestly protest that it is neither fair, nor honest, nor philosophical, to make the acquired, vitiated taste of this alcoholic age, and in cold climates, the standard by which to test the taste of the ancients who lived in hot countries; and, because we love and use alcoholic drinks, therefore conclude that the ancients must also have loved and used them, and only them.

—*Bible Wines*, pp. 22-23

Fermentation Destroys Sweetness

It should be understood that as sweet juices ferment, the sugar is converted into alcohol and the sweetness is lost. The very property of sweetness which is universally sought after is lost upon fermentation.

We are so obsessed with sweet things as a culture today that we have forgotten that the manufacture of sugar and of most of today’s sweets is a very recent development. Five hundred years ago the sugar industry was all

but non-existent, and sweets aside from honey and other natural foods were hard to come by.

Have we forgotten how scarce and difficult to preserve sweet things were two to four thousand years ago? With the natural desire to satisfy our “sweet tooth” it should not be surprising to find that the ancient civilizations of the world were also quite able to make and preserve the sweetness of their wines.

The laws of fermentation dictate that the sweet grape-juice of the Middle East would have very quickly become sour in that hot climate unless preserved by one or more of the methods already discussed. Fermentation into an alcoholic wine would have been quite difficult to produce.

Did the ancients have the ability and the custom of preserving sweet unfermented juices which they called wines? The answer is an unqualified yes. We have the testimony of many ancient writers including: Plutarch, Plato, Pliny, Aristotle, Cato, Columella, Horace, Homer and others including the writers of the Bible, of course have given us their written testimonies.

Is it possible that we have consciously or unconsciously imposed the thinking of our own age upon that period of history? It is very difficult today to find a book that fairly treats the issue of “sweet unfermented wines” as contrasted with the more common “fermented wines.”

Our Cultural Acceptance of Alcohol

Our culture has essentially taken a vote. It has been to condone and accept the use of alcoholic beverages—from the halls of Congress to the baseball diamond, from Hollywood to the majority of our homes—alcohol is in.

It is obvious that such a cultural approval could not take place without affecting the way

we interpret our past. This is apparently just what has happened, because today few people know or care to know about the “health juice” industry of our distant past.

All that is ever taught in schools or textbooks about the wines of antiquity is that the Romans had drunken orgies and that they even had a god to bless their use of alcoholic beverages—*Bacchus*. The Greek counterpart of this pagan god was known as Dionysus. It is not commonly known that the Greeks and Romans never drank pure wine, they always mixed it with water in varying amounts. The questionable impression is that people who lived in ancient times were less intelligent and had little expertise in the sciences. (Admittedly the accumulation of knowledge has increased, but this has little to do with the ability to use it—let alone use it wisely.)

Even though the Greeks and Romans did commonly use fermented wines, it is not commonly known today that the women of those cultures were forbidden to drink intoxicating wine.

The prohibition of intoxicating wines to women was enforced by the severest penalties. “Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and others have noticed the hereditary transmission of intemperate propensities, and the legislation that imposed abstinence upon women had unquestionably in view the greater vigor of the offspring—the ‘*mens sana in corpore sano*’ (healthy minds in a healthy body).”

—*Bible Commentary*, p. 72

Polybius, in a fragment of his 6th book, says, “Among the Romans the women were forbidden to drink (intoxicating) wine; they drink, however, what is called *passum*, made from raisins, which drink very much resembled *Ægosthenian* and *Cretan gleukos* (sweet wine), and which men use for the purpose of allaying excessive thirst.

—*Nott*, London Ed. p. 80

It must further be remembered that the Mother Church of the Middle Ages not only condoned and encouraged the use of alcohol, but her leaders were those who invented and

propagated the use of many of the “hard liquors” of our day. The use of alcohol on festive occasions (which always centered around the church) was encouraged. This is still true in Latin America from the writer’s personal experience.

It was the pagan religions of Greece and Rome that also centered around alcohol and drunkenness. They believed that their religious experience was brought about and heightened by their drunkenness. Artificial religious experience brought about by the use of drugs has been a part of nearly every culture in history.

It was against this type of religious debauchery that the apostle Paul warned the Ephesians not to be drunken as others. He contrasts the nature of their old lives as filthiness, fornication, foolishness, and walking in darkness with that of the new life. As we walk with Christ in the light, we are no longer to be drunken with wine but filled with the Spirit of God and reject the darkness of the world (Ephesians 5:1-20).

Scriptural Evidence

This brings us to what the Scriptures say about the use of wine and strong drink. It should be emphasized again that the Romans and the Greeks used several different words for both the unfermented and the fermented juice of the grape. They are generally translated as “wine.” They were not always consistent in their use of these words and the real meaning must be derived from the context. The same is true for the Bible—the meaning must be derived from the context and from our knowledge of the nature of God and his laws.

Latin words which are translated as wine include: *must* or *mustum* which usually meant a sweet unfermented wine, but sometimes just meant any kind of wine. *Vinum*

Greek counterparts are *gleukus* which usually meant a sweet unfermented wine just like *mustum* in Latin. But it could undergo fermentation and still have the same name, but as the sugar ferments into alcohol, its sweetness is lost. (By the way, this is where we get the word *glucose*, which which is a simple sugar.) *Oinos* is a generic Greek word for any kind of wine. Both of these words are used in the New Testament.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the word *yayin* is a generic word for any form of the juice of the grape. It may mean sweet, sour, or fermented. It is used one hundred forty-one times in the Bible. It is always used in the sense of mixed wine. It was usually mixed with water, but sometimes with other things like honey, herbs, etc. It has a connection with the meaning of bubbling up, such as in boiling.

Tirosh is another generic word which means the natural produce of the vine. It can mean wine as in Isaiah and Proverbs respectively.

The sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine,
for the which thou hast labored. (Isa. 62:8)

And thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
(Prov. 3:10)

‘*Tirosh* is connected with corn [wheat] and the fruit of the olive and the orchard nineteen times; with corn alone eleven times; with the vine, three times; and is otherwise named five times: in all, thirty-eight times.’ ‘It is translated in the Authorized Version twenty-six times by wine, eleven times by new wine (Neh. x. 39, xiii. 5, 12; Prov. iii. 10; Isa. xxiv. 7, lxx. 8; Hos. iv. 14, ix. 2; Joel i. 10; Hag. i. 11; Zach. ix. 17), and once (Micah vi. 15) by ‘sweet wine,’ where the margin has new wine.’

—*Bible Wines*, p. 59

So uniform is the good use of this word that there is but one doubtful exception (Hosea iv. 11): ‘Whoredom and wine (*yayin*), and new wine (*tirosh*), take away the heart.’ Here are three different things, each of which is charged with taking away the heart. As whoredom is not the same as *yayin*, so *yayin* is not the same as *tirosh*. If physical

intoxication is not a necessary attribute of the first, then why is it of the third, especially when the second is adequate for intoxication? If *yayin* and *tirosh* each means intoxicating wine, then why use both? It would then read, whoredom and *yayin* (intoxicating wine) and *tirosh* (intoxicating wine) take away the heart, which is tautological. The three terms are symbolical.

Whoredom is a common designation of idolatry, which the context particularly names. This steals the heart from God as really as does literal whoredom.

Yayin may represent drunkenness or debased sensuality. This certainly takes away the heart.

Tirosh may represent luxury, and, in this application, dishonesty, as *tirosh* formed a portion of the tithes, rapacity in exaction, and perversion in their use, is fitly charged with taking away the heart.

Certain interpreters imagine that only alcoholic drinks take away the heart; but we know from the Bible that pride, ambition, worldly pleasures, fullness of bread, Ezek. xvi. 49, and other things, take away the heart. —*Bible Wines*, pp. 59-60

Tirosh is pictured as the kind of wine which is a blessing to the Lord's people. It does not carry with it the solemn warnings about destruction and judgment.

Shakar is another Hebrew generic word which usually means "sweet drink," but it can be either fermented or unfermented. It generally refers to the sweet juice from fruits other than grapes. (Incidentally, this is the root word for *sugar* in the English language.) *Shakar* is mentioned twenty-three times in the Old Testament. It is usually translated as "strong drink." To one who grew up speaking English, this conveys the meaning of a strong, distilled, intoxicating beverages such as whiskey, vodka, gin, brandy, etc. However this is not the case.

Distillation & Strong Drinks

The process of distillation to concentrate alcohol in an intoxicating liquor was unknown

in Bible times. A crude form of distillation is thought to have been first used around A.D. 200 in Alexandria, Egypt. But it did not come into common use for alcoholic beverages until nearly one thousand years later.

The series of epidemics called the Black Death (A.D. 1348-1350) introduced the use of strong distilled alcohol as a solvent in such medicines, and after the epidemics were over the taste for strong spirits and liqueurs, originally conceived as cures for pestilence and disease, remained and set back the consumption of wine. —*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1976, vol. 26, p. 46, article "Wine."

So the "strong drinks" that are mentioned in the Bible are not the same thing as the "strong drinks" of our day. The strong drinks of the Bible were either full strength undiluted fermented or unfermented wine, or wine that had been "mingled" with drugs.

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. . .

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 oftener 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*, 63-64

Wine in Context

It is very important to read every scripture in its context and derive meaning from the whole of the text. The student of scripture

will notice that the word wine is used in *three different ways*.

1. The word wine is simply used with *no way of determining its character*.
2. The word wine is used in a clear way to denote blessing—this is a *good wine*.
3. The word wine is used in such a way as to identify its *bad character*.

It is pointless to examine the references that give no way to determine the character of wine.

The good wine is used as an offering to the Lord. In Numbers 18:12 *Tirosh* is brought with the best of all of the gifts from God. The best oil, the best wheat, the best wine belong to the Lord. *Tirosh* wine is grouped with the blessings and necessities of life. (Genesis 27:28, Deuteronomy 7:13 & 11:14, Proverbs 3:10, Isaiah 65:8, Joel 3:18)

In Judges 9:13 “And the vine said, Should I leave my wine [*tirosh*], which cheereth the heart of God and man?”

There is a strange impression, very current in our day, that nothing can cheer and exhilarate but alcoholic drinks. Is it not written, Zech. ix. 7, ‘Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine (*tirosh*) the maids’?
—*Bible Wines*, p. 72

The kind of cheer and gladness that is used in Scripture in connection with wine *does not have to mean* the kind of “cheer” that comes out of a bottle of beer or hard liquor. Cool water can bring similar refreshment to a thirsty soul, just like food to a hungry man or good news to someone who is lonely or depressed.

The good kind of wine is associated with spiritual blessings (Isaiah 55:1, Psalm 104:15). It is a symbol of the atoning blood of Christ (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, 1 Corinthians 10:16). It is very interesting that on the occasion of the Last Supper, Jesus did not use any word for wine. Could it be

that He anticipated the problems that have arisen about the meaning of these words? He simply used the word “*cup*” and the expression “*fruit of the vine*” to describe what they were drinking. Then he promised that he would drink it “*new*” when he comes in his father’s kingdom.

The distinction in quality between the good and the bad wine is as clear as that between good and bad men, or good and bad wives, or good and bad spirits; for one is the constant subject of warning, designated poison literally, analogically, and figuratively, while the other is commended as refreshing and innocent, which no alcoholic wine is. —Lee’s Appendix, p. 232

New Wine in Old Bottles

It has been commonly taught that the fact that Jesus said not to put new wine in old bottles lest they break, that this is evidence that the wine always fermented (Matthew 9:23, Mark 2:20, Luke 5:37).

Columella, who lived in the days of the Apostles, gave a recipe for making wine that is “always sweet.” He emphatically states that the newest and purest “*must*” should be put in a “new amphora,” or jar. This along with other techniques used effectively prevented the sweet juice from fermenting, and thus breaking the jar. A new jar or even a new wine skin would not contain the residue of yeast which would have resulted from an opened and partially used jar.

Since the principles of sterilization were at that time unknown, the next best thing was to use a new and uncontaminated container. So the lesson was two-fold: yes the old bottle may break because it is weaker, but the point is that the old bottle had the cause of fermentation built into it and would immediately cause the sweet wine to spoil.

Jesus: a Wine Bibber?

Jesus was accused of being a wine bibber. We must remember that these same enemies

of Jesus also said that he was gluttonous and that he had a devil. If the first accusation is to be accepted, then the other accusations against him must also be accepted.

John the Baptist did not drink wine, but Jesus did. This was because John was a *Nazerite* who could not drink *any* form of beverage from grapes. In fact, a Nazerite could not even eat raisins. Jesus was *not a Nazerite, He* was a *Nazarene* (meaning that he came from Nazareth) and had no such restrictions on his eating habits.

The fact is that the men who accused Jesus of these things were liars and eventually murdered him. They were trying to destroy his character. How can we accept their testimony as being accurate?

The Lord's Supper

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover. On the day of Preparation before the Passover, the Israel was commanded to remove all leavening (yeast—a symbol of sin and corruption) from their homes (Exodus 12:8, 15, 17-20, 34, 39). To break this law was to be cut off from Israel.

Incidentally, *Kosher* wine may be purchased in many grocery stores today. It is used at the Seder meal or Passover. It is nothing more than pure unfermented grape juice.

The law forbade *seor*—yeast, ferment, whatever could excite fermentation—and *khamatz*, whatever had undergone fermentation, or been subject to the action of *seor*. —*Bible Commentary*, p. 280

Leavening, ferment, or yeast has always symbolized sin and corruption to an Israelite. The Lord commanded Israel in Exodus 34:25:

Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven.

On the other hand, salt has the ability to preserve and save, so it was required for sacrifices (Leviticus 2:13). These were not just

arbitrary commandments, they had important symbolism and real meaning behind them.

One of the attributes of the Messiah was that he was to see no corruption.

Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. —Psalm 16:10

His body was not to decay while it lay in the tomb for the three days. On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter attested to this fact:

He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. —Acts 2:31

While preaching in Anitoch, the apostle Paul gave another witness to the fact that Jesus saw no corruption—that is decomposition or decay.

Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. —Acts 13:35-37

The bread, at the Last Supper, in order to be a fit symbol of the Lord's flesh that would see no corruption had to be unleavened bread. By the same token, the "fruit of the vine" that Christ used for the symbol of his blood, had to be unleavened, or unfermented. Beside this, all leaven and materials that had been subject to the action of leaven had already been removed from the home on the day of Preparation.

This same symbolism is attested to by the apostle Paul when he wrote to the saints in Corinth.

Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
—1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Paul very clearly teaches the meaning of leavening in this passage. Leaven is the sinful nature of the old man that is to be removed that we might live as a new person. We are to be unleavened, just as Christ was unleavened.

It has been commonly taught for many years in the Restoration Movement that the parable of the leaven that the woman “hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matthew 13:33) is a prophecy of the action of the Restoration on the world. Just the opposite. Leavening is the symbol of corruption and sin which entered into the church and the kingdom and brought about the apostasy.

If leaven was not allowed with the sacrifices, which were the types of the atoning blood of Christ, how much more would it be a violation of the commandment to allow leaven, or that which was fermented, to be the symbol of the blood of atonement? We cannot imagine that our Lord, in disregard of so positive a command, would admit leaven into the element which was to perpetuate the memory of the sacrifice of himself, of which all the other sacrifices were but types.

—*Bible Wines*, p. 85

It is strange, very strange, that our Lord should require his disciples perpetually to use, as a religious duty, at his table, the article which Dr. Laurie says “all good men agree is dangerous, and not to be used except as a medicine prescribed by another.” Does Christ, who has taught us to pray “lead us not into temptation,” thus require his disciples to use habitually, in remembrance of him, an article too dangerous to be used anywhere else?

—*Bible Wines*, p. 86

Again, recall what Jesus called the liquid which they drank on the night that he instituted the Lord’s Supper. He called it “the fruit of the vine.” This is a clear reference to

the freshest possible form of the blood of the grape. Then he promised to drink it *new* with them in his Father’s kingdom (Matthew 26:29). The Greek word here for new (*kainos*) refers to its freshness.

The Wedding at Cana

But Jesus’ first miracle was to create wine from water (John 2:1-11). The governor of the feast even called it the “*best* wine.” The question is then, by what standard do we judge the best wines?

The moral influence of the miracle will be determined by the character of the wine. It is pertinent to ask, Is it not derogatory to the character of Christ and the teachings of the Bible to suppose that he exerted his miraculous power to produce, according to Alvord, 126, and according to Smith, at least 60 gallons of intoxicating wine?—wine which inspiration had denounced as “a mocker,” as “biting like a serpent,” and “stinging like an adder,” as “the poison of dragons,” “the cruel venom of asps,” and which the Holy Ghost had selected as the emblem of the wrath of God Almighty?

Chrysostom, born A.D. 344, says: “Now, indeed, making plain that it is he who changes into wine the water in the vines and the rain drawn up by the roots. He produced instantly at the wedding-feast that which is formed in the plant during a long course of time.” —*Bible Wines*, pp. 89-91

As previously cited, ancient writers stated that the most useful, the safest, and those esteemed for their sweet flavor were the unfermented wines that were produced in their day. When we consider that the cultures around Israel knew how to produce these types of wine and used them with regularity, and also that God had warned them about certain wines and in other places gave his blessings to the use of apparently other kinds of wine, the picture becomes quite clear. There most certainly were two types of wines in common use in Bible times.

Good for the Stomach

The wine that Paul recommended to Timothy as being good for the stomach is now easily understood (1 Timothy 5:23). Many of the wines (unfermented) were mixed with herbs and medicines for health reasons. The sweet Lesbian wine is described by Athenæus for just such a purpose:

Let him take sweet wine (*glukus*), either mixed with water or warmed, especially that called *protropos*, as being *very good for the stomach*.

—Nott, Lond. Ed. p. 96

Pliny, Columella, Philo, and others state that many of the wines of their day produced “headaches, dropsy, madness, and *stomach complaints*.”

—Nott, Lond. Ed. p. 96.

We can hardly believe that Paul recommended these. Yet these strikingly designate the effects of alcoholic wines. The same writers tell us that wines destitute of all strength [alcohol] were exceedingly wholesome and useful to the body, *salubre corpis*.

—*Bible Wines*, pp. 112-113

This argument loses its force when the truth about the ancient customs of the Middle East is known.

Drunkards at Pentecost

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
—Acts 2:13

This is a very strange form of logic, if it could be called that. How could the drinking of *anything* make it possible for anyone to learn a language which he had not previously known? These men were not just babbling as drunkards. They were being understood by people who had come from every known part of the world.

Remember that the false statements made against Jesus were not very rational either.

Temperance as a Virtue

When Paul spoke before Felix in Acts 24:25 he reasoned about temperance. Some have

taken this and said that if a person is moderate in drinking as in other things, that there is no harm. There is *nothing* in the context of this or any other scripture that indicates that we ought to be *moderate drinkers*. The same kind of reasoning that would say that drunkenness is wrong, but drinking in moderation is all right could be used to condone moderate rioting, moderate fornication, moderate adultery, moderate strife, etc.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. —1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Drunkards are herein categorized with fornicators, homosexuals, thieves, extortioners and the like. Those who continue in this lifestyle will not inherit the kingdom of God. Moderation of these things is not even hinted at in the Scriptures, but total abstinence is required.

Modern Counsel to the Lord's People

What has God revealed to his servants in the Latter Days? The prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. was given a revelation from the Lord on February 27, 1833 which has become known as the “Word of Wisdom.” In it the Lord states: Inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold, it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together, to offer up your sacraments before him. And behold, this should be wine; yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. —Doctrine and Covenants 86:1b-c

Wine and the liquors of that day are condemned as harmful to the human body, except externally. Instruction is specific about the “wine” which should be used for the Lord's

Supper. It is to be pure grape juice of our own make.

The Lord gave direction to the church on April 11, 1887 through Joseph Smith III in a similar manner.

Men of God, who bear the vessels of the Lord, be ye clean in your bodies and in your clothing. . . Avoid the use tobacco and be not addicted to strong drink in any form.
—Doctrine and Covenants 119:3:c-d

The Lord's instruction is very clear down through the ages. Anything that takes control of our minds and bodies and removes our moral agency is contrary to what God desires for us. He wants us to have full control of our faculties so that we can continually choose to live as he has designed for us. We cannot do that if we are under the control of an addicting substance such as alcohol or any of the multitude of drugs which are commonly enslaving people today.

When Paul speaks of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:16-25, he mentions drunkenness, but he also mentions *witchcraft*. This has been commonly misunderstood as just a superstitious comment about witches. What he really means is found in the meaning of the Greek word for witchcraft here: *pharmakia*—which is the root for the English word **pharmacy**. Now the real meaning surfaces—one who deals in illicit drugs.

God has clearly warned us against the use of addictive and mind altering substances. He knows that they have ever led man away from Him. False religions down through the ages have used these substances to bring their subjects under bondage and control.

Conclusion

The final statements about this subject made by Professor Moses Stuart are very clear and in agreement with the previous material.

My final conclusion is this, viz.: that, whenever the Scriptures speak of wine as a comfort, a blessing, or a libation to God, and rank it with such articles as corn and oil, they mean—they can mean—*only*

such wine as contained no alcohol that could have a mischievous tendency; that wherein they denounce it, prohibit it, and connect it with drunkenness and revelling, they can mean only alcoholic or intoxicating wine.

If I take the position that God's *Word* and *works* entirely harmonize, I must take the position that the case before us is as I have represented it to be. Facts show that the ancients not only preserved wine unfermented, but regarded it as of a higher flavor and finer quality than fermented wine. Facts show that it was, and might be drunk at pleasure without any inebriation whatever. On the other hand, facts show that any considerable quantity of fermented wine did and would produce inebriation; and also that a tendency towards it, or a disturbance of the fine tissues of the physical system, was and would be produced by even a small quantity of it; full surely if this was often drunk.

What then, is the difficulty in taking the position that the *good and innocent wine* is meant in all cases where it is commended and allowed; or that the *alcoholic or intoxicating wine* is meant in all cases of prohibition and denunciation?

I cannot refuse to take this position without virtually impeaching the Scriptures of contradiction or inconsistency. I cannot admit that God has given liberty to persons in health to drink alcoholic wine, without admitting that his *Word* and his *works* are at variance.
—*Bible Wines*, pp. 126-127

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). This is God's word. No one doubts that this is speaking of intoxicating wine. Why would the word of God call it a mocker? Is it only when it is not used in moderation that it becomes a mocker. Too much sugar, too much salt, too much of nearly any good thing can become harmful. Does that make these things mockers? It is not too difficult to figure out that the wine in this verse is a mocker because it contains a chemical which by its very nature is deceptive and habit forming. With more than twenty million alcoholics in the United States today,

this is much more than a mere topic of discussion. It affects our whole way of culture.

Alcohol can so gradually move in and take control of a person's life that he either does not realize it or is so deceived that he refuses to face up to the facts. Millions of people have fallen under its cruel dominion, and millions live under its deception today. Yes intoxicating wine is a mocker.

The inconsistency is:

Would God call a thing a mocker, and then press the mocker to men's lips? Would he tell men not to look upon it, and then give it to them to drink?

—*Bible Wines*, p. 129

When we realize that the ancients *did* know how to preserve non-intoxicating wines, and used them as a normal part of their lives, we are compelled to accept that this harmless sweet wine was that which the Lord chose as a symbol for blessing and commended to us to drink freely of it.

Members of the Restoration Movement have taught for years that if God is an unchangeable God, then his word must be consistent throughout all time. It is also plain as Mr. Stuart has stated, that "His works should be consistent with His word." Certainly man has not changed in nature since recorded history began. He has the same needs, desires, and weaknesses. And certainly a loving God would not deliberately lead His creatures into a way of life by His word and His ordinances that would bring them into physical and spiritual destruction and ruin.

There were in ancient times, two kinds of wine in common use, the kind of wine that is the alcoholic variety which has been common since Bible times, and which is described in most dictionaries, and usually regarded as the *only* kind of wine. However there did exist a second type of wine which is good and innocent which was nothing more than sweet grape juice. This second kind of wine has

been all but erased from our collective memory of history. Nevertheless, it did exist and without a knowledge of it, many good people have been led astray by mininterpreting verses in the Bible. The only way to fully understand what the Bible says about wine and alcoholic beverages is to have a sound understanding of the ancient writings of the Greeks, Romans and Hebrews.

The reader is now freed to make intelligent decisions regarding fermented and non-fermented wines (or any other alcoholic beverages), and is encouraged to look up the references to these ancient writings to satisfy his own need to know.

This article needs the quote from Proverbs 23:29–35 which describes a drunk.