



The Sacred Elixir: Christian Biblical Wine for Holy Communion

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Abstract: *This comprehensive examination delves into the diverse definitions and applications of wine, interweaving scientific, biblical, and cultural perspectives to contextualize its significance within the Christian sacrament. Exploring the chemical, microbiological, oenological, geographical, and physicochemical facets of wine, the study provides a nuanced understanding of its multifaceted nature. Scientific inquiry illuminates the myriad uses of wine, ranging from culinary and biomedical contexts to analytical chemistry and environmental considerations. The discourse extends to the symbolic depth of red wine, theological perspectives, and the pivotal role wine plays in both the Old and New Testaments. Notably, the viewpoints of evangelical theologians are meticulously examined, culminating in a poignant exploration of the sacred communion ritual, particularly its profound relevance for individuals in their final moments. This examination transcends the traditional confines of wine analysis, intertwining its scientific complexities with the spiritual and cultural dimensions encapsulated in biblical narratives. The symbolic richness of wine emerges as a common thread, connecting its chemical composition to profound theological implications. The discerning gaze of evangelical theologians further enriches the discourse, shedding light on the theological nuances surrounding wine within the Christian tradition. Finally, the exploration culminates in a poignant consideration of the sacred communion, offering profound insights into its transformative significance, particularly when administered to individuals nearing the culmination of their earthly journey. Fundamentally, this inquiry reveals the intricate interplay of meanings intricately woven into the essence of wine. It goes beyond the mere material substance, encapsulating a symbolic resonance that extends across the domains of science, spirituality, and culture.*

Keywords: *wine; sacrament; scientific; biblic; communion*

I. Introduction

Sacraments, sacred rituals ordained by Christ, are profound expressions of divine grace woven into the fabric of Christian theology. Rooted in the biblical narrative and sustained by centuries of theological reflection, sacraments serve as visible signs of invisible realities, bridging the earthly and the divine. At their core, sacraments embody the profound truths of God's covenantal relationship with humanity, providing channels through which believers participate in the redemptive narrative.

Baptism, the initiation sacrament, symbolizes spiritual rebirth and incorporation into the body of Christ. Through the waters of baptism, believers undergo a transformative experience, signifying both cleansing from sin and entry into the community of faith. It is a sacrament of initiation, marking the commencement of a journey shaped by the indelible mark of God's grace.

The Holy Communion, or Eucharist, stands as the sacrament of sustenance and communion. In the shared act of partaking in the consecrated bread and wine, believers commune with the living Christ and one another. The Eucharist is a sacred banquet where the tangible elements become vessels of transcendent meaning, representing the sacrificial offering of Christ's body and blood for the redemption of humanity.

Sacraments, therefore, are not merely symbolic rituals but profound encounters with divine reality. They illuminate the mysteries of God's presence, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. As conduits of grace, sacraments invite believers to engage in a tangible dialogue with the sacred, fostering a deeper understanding of their identity in Christ and their participation in the unfolding drama of redemption.

Christian sacraments collectively form a rich tapestry of spiritual practices, guiding believers through key milestones and shaping their journey of faith. Each sacrament serves as a tangible expression of God's grace, drawing believers into deeper communion with the divine and illuminating the transformative power of God's redemptive plan.

II. Research methods

2.1 The Wine as a Material

a. Alcoholic Fermentation

Wine is an alcoholic beverage. From a chemical standpoint, wine emerges as an alcoholic libation through the fermentation of grape juice. Its constitution predominantly encompasses ethanol and water, interwoven with a rich tapestry of organic compounds. Among these are sugars, acids, phenolics, and volatile aroma compounds. This nuanced concoction gives rise to the intricate and diverse sensory experiences discerned within this venerable beverage, rendering it a captivating subject of oenological exploration. (Robijaona Rahelivololoniaina & Elisoamiadana, 2023)

b. Microbiological Aspect

Wine is a complex and dynamic oenological product. From a microbiological perspective, wine evolves as a sophisticated, harmonious balance and vibrant oenological creation. Its inception involves the meticulous cultivation of particular grape varieties, followed by a sequence of precise processes: crushing, maceration, fermentation, clarification, and maturation. These orchestrated steps seek to attain an exquisite equilibrium among flavors, aromas, and structural elements, defining the nuanced character of the final product. Rooted in scientific precision, this intricate interplay of microbial activities shapes the sensory profile of wine, elevating it to a refined expression of terroir and craftsmanship within the oenological realm. (Tofalo, 2021; Nardi, 2020)

c. Oenological Definition

Wine, a fermented product, an alchemic creation, emerges through the intricate dance of fermentation. Orchestrated by the metabolic prowess of yeast, notably *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, this transformative process unfolds within the rich sugars of grape must. The yeast's enzymatic ballet, a delicate choreography, begets the alchemical conversion of sugars into ethereal components—alcohol and carbon dioxide. In this harmonious interplay of microbial activity, the liquid metamorphosis encapsulates the essence of viticulture, producing a libation where the tangible elements of grapes transmute into the intangible delights of intoxicating spirits and effervescent grace. (Inglis, 2015)

d. Geographical and Varietal Context

Wine epitomizes the culmination of vinification, an intricate process that transforms distinct grape varieties cultivated in meticulously chosen viticultural realms. The resulting libation is a testament to the singular nuances imparted by the interplay of terroir, where the characteristics of the soil, climate, and refined winemaking techniques converge in harmonious synergy. Each sip encapsulates the essence of its origin, portraying a symphony of flavors and aromas intricately woven into the fabric of the grape's journey from vine to cellar. In this refined elixir, the artistry of viticulture unfolds, yielding a sensory tapestry that echoes the uniqueness of its terroir. (Inglis, 2015)

e. Physicochemical Symbiosis

Wine emerges as a sophisticated colloidal solution, presenting a nuanced and heterogeneous composition. Within this elixir, suspended solids intermingle with dissolved gases and an array of solutes, creating a complex tapestry of sensory elements. The spectrum of color, taste, and aroma, defining the liquid poetry within each glass, unfolds intricately. Influenced by meticulous factors, including pH, temperature, and oxidation-reduction potential, this enigmatic libation encapsulates the culmination of scientific precision and artisanal finesse. Each sip unveils a sensory journey, harmonizing the intricacies of chemistry with the artistry of winemaking, transforming humble grape derivatives into a symphony of flavor and fragrance. (Ofoedu et al., 2022)

These explanations encompass the intricate character of wine, the multifaceted nature of wine, taking into account its chemical makeup, microbiological roots, oenological procedures, regional impacts, and physicochemical characteristics.

2.2. Biblical Significations of Wine

In biblical contexts, wine is often symbolically rich, carrying various meanings and representations.

a. Sacramental Symbol

Wine assumes a sacred role within Christianity, serving as a sacramental symbol that embodies the profound connection between God and humanity. Specifically, during the Eucharist, it symbolically represents the blood of Christ, fostering a tangible manifestation of the covenant. In this sacred context, wine transcends its material essence, becoming a conduit for spiritual significance. Its consumption signifies redemption and spiritual nourishment, symbolizing the transformative bond between the divine and the human, where each sip becomes a ritual act, reinforcing the covenantal promise and the spiritual sustenance offered through the symbolic blood of Christ. Matthew 26:26-28 (NIV); Mark 14:22-24 (NIV); Luke 22:17-20 (NIV)

b. Symbol of Celebration

In biblical chronicles, wine consistently serves as a poignant symbol of joy and celebration. Its symbolic resonance extends to pivotal occasions such as feasts, weddings, and moments of jubilation, portraying a deeper narrative of abundance and divine blessings. The association of wine with these significant events underscores its role as a metaphor for the richness of life and the divine favor bestowed upon these communal gatherings. Within the biblical tapestry, the pouring of wine becomes a ritual act, symbolizing not only the material aspects of festivity but also an acknowledgment of spiritual abundance and the divine benevolence that graces such joyous occasions. Psalm 104:14-15 (NIV); Isaiah 55:1-2 (NIV); Ecclesiastes 3:13 (NIV); Zechariah 10:7 (NIV); Amos 9:13-14 (NIV)

c. Metaphor for God's Favor

Biblical verses poetically employ the imagery of vineyards and plentiful wine as a metaphor conveying God's favor and prosperity. Within this metaphorical framework, the lush vineyards symbolize divine blessings, cultivating a vivid narrative of a flourishing relationship between God and His people. The bountiful yield of wine becomes a visual testament to the abundance and favor bestowed upon those in communion with the divine. In this refined portrayal, the metaphor transcends the literal, weaving a tapestry of spiritual richness and prosperity, accentuating the harmonious and flourishing bond shared between the Creator and those embraced within His providential care. Psalm 104:14-15 (NIV); Isaiah 25:6 (NIV); Joel 2:19 (NIV); Zechariah 9:15 (NIV); Amos 9:14 (NIV)

d. Symbol of Gladness and Rejoicing

In biblical verses, wine is lauded as a conduit of joy and celebration, representing more than a mere libation. It embodies a profound symbol, signifying the elation stemming from divine blessings and a life harmoniously attuned to God's will. The mention of wine as a source of gladness underscores a deeper narrative—a celebration not only of the physical pleasures found in its consumption but, more significantly, a spiritual rejoicing that arises from living in accordance with the divine design. This refined perspective views wine as a metaphorical expression of the joy inherent in a life aligned with God's benevolent guidance. Psalm 104:14-15 (NIV); Judges 9:13 (NIV); Ecclesiastes 10:19 (NIV); Jeremiah 31:12 (NIV); Zechariah 10:19 (NIV)

e. Representative of God's Bounty

Biblical references depicting an abundance of wine are nuanced portrayals, symbolizing the manifestation of God's providence and abundant generosity. Within this metaphorical framework, the vineyard emerges as a poignant symbol, representing the bountiful creation crafted by God. The imagery transcends the literal, conveying a deeper narrative of divine munificence. The plenitude of wine becomes an eloquent expression of God's providential care, highlighting the richness inherent in His creation. In this refined perspective, the vineyard stands not only as a literal source of wine but also as a metaphorical testament to the abundant blessings bestowed upon His creation. Genesis 27:28 (NIV); Joel 2:19 (NIV); Amos 9:13-14 (NIV); Zechariah 9:16-17 (NIV)

f. Metaphor for Judgment

Within select biblical passages, wine takes on metaphorical significance, serving as a poignant vehicle to convey divine judgment. The symbolic expression of the "cup of God's wrath" employs wine as a powerful metaphor, representing the consequences incurred through disobedience. This nuanced imagery paints a vivid picture of divine justice, wherein the repercussions for wayward actions are encapsulated within the symbolism of a cup filled with the intensity of God's displeasure. The refined interpretation views wine not solely as a beverage but as a profound symbol, embodying the weight of divine consequences for those who deviate from righteous paths. Jeremiah 25:15-16 (NIV); Revelation 14:10 (NIV)

g. Symbol of Transformation

Wine, in its intricate journey of fermentation and maturation, becomes a poignant metaphor for transformation. Beyond a mere libation, it encapsulates the profound narrative of metamorphosis—a symbol mirroring the transformative hand of God in both individuals and communities. The alchemical processes of fermentation and maturation represent the stages of spiritual evolution, embodying the divine craftsmanship that imparts depth and maturity. This refined perspective views wine not only as a sensory indulgence but as a living

allegory, echoing the spiritual growth and maturation fostered by the transformative touch of the divine within the intricate tapestry of human existence. Isaiah 1:18 (NIV); 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV); John 2:1-11 (NIV)

h. Symbol of New Covenant

Within the New Testament, wine frequently emerges as a symbolic conduit, intricately woven into the narrative of the new covenant forged by Jesus. This refined context assigns profound meaning to wine, transforming it into a metaphor for the remission of sins and the assurance of eternal life—an emblematic representation of Christ's sacrificial offering. The nuanced portrayal views wine not merely as a libation but as a sacramental symbol, embodying the redemptive essence and eternal promises encapsulated within the profound covenant established through the selfless act of Christ's sacrifice. Matthew 26:27-29 (NIV); Mark 14:23-25 (NIV); Luke 22:20 (NIV); 1 Corinthians 11:25 (NIV)

These diverse definitions of wine in the Bible reflect its multifaceted symbolism, encompassing elements of sacrament, celebration, joy, prosperity, judgment, transformation, and covenantal significance.

III. Results and discussion

3.1. Results by Scientific Exploration

a. Culinary Applications of Wine

Wine serves as a key ingredient in culinary applications. Beyond its role as a beverage, wine stands as a culinary cornerstone, weaving its nuanced distinctive flavors and aromas into an array of dishes. Through reduction techniques, marinades, and sauces, wine imparts a distinctive character to culinary creations. Its complex composition, marked by volatile compounds and polyphenols, facilitates a sensory symphony that elevates the gastronomic experience. This integration of wine into culinary practices showcases its versatility, transforming it into an essential ingredient that harmonizes and enhances the richness of diverse cuisines. (Di Matteo et al., 2017; Chrea et al., 2017 ; Santos et al., 2015)

b. Biomedical Applications of Wine

Within the realm of biomedical research, a spotlight has been cast on wine polyphenols, notably resveratrol, for their prospective health advantages. Extensive investigations have explored their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, uncovering promising findings that hint at potential cardiovascular and neuroprotective effects. The multifaceted attributes of wine polyphenols offer a tantalizing avenue for therapeutic exploration, sparking interest in their role as potential agents in combating oxidative stress and inflammation, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on preventive health strategies and novel biomedical interventions. (Ndiave et al., 2016; Monteiro et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2008)

c. Analytical Chemistry of Wine

Within the realm of analytical chemistry, wine assumes a pivotal role as a sample matrix, subject to rigorous scrutiny through techniques like chromatography and spectroscopy. These methodologies enable a meticulous dissection of the beverage's composition, unveiling valuable insights into its chemical profile, authenticity, and overall quality. The application of these analytical tools is instrumental in ensuring the precision and reliability of assessments related to wine, playing a critical role in both quality control measures within the industry and the broader understanding of the intricate chemical nuances that define this celebrated libation. (del Alamo-Sanza et al., 2014; Flamini & Traldi, 2009; Noble & Francis, 2004)

d. Cultural and Social Context of Wine

Wine, a cultural and social linchpin, assumes a profound role in diverse settings, acting as a symbolic element in rituals, celebrations, and communal gatherings. Its consumption is deeply entwined with cultural traditions and societal norms, reflecting a dynamic interplay between heritage and contemporary practices. From ceremonial to convivial contexts, the presence of wine resonates as a unifying force, fostering connections and enhancing the fabric of shared experiences. This versatile libation transcends mere beverage status, evolving into a cultural artifact that mirrors the evolving tapestry of human interactions and the rich spectrum of traditions that define our global heritage. (Black & Ulin, 2018; Health, 2015; Cahrters, 2006)

e. Agricultural Practices for Wine Production

The intricate process of viticulture, essential for wine production, intricately weaves scientific principles into the cultivation of grapes. Soil analysis guides decision-making, ensuring optimal nutrient levels for vine health. Pest management strategies protect grapevines from potential threats, preserving the fruit's integrity. Vineyard management techniques, ranging from pruning to canopy management, are meticulously employed to maximize grape quality and yield. This harmonious integration of science and tradition underscores the precision required in viticulture, where each decision contributes to the nuanced artistry of winemaking and the ultimate expression of terroir in every carefully tended grape. (Rodriguez et al., 2021; Torres et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019)

f. Industrial Fermentation of Wine

The versatility of wine yeast strains, notably *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, transcends winemaking, playing a pivotal role in industrial fermentation processes. These strains are integral to the bioethanol production, contributing to the sustainable energy sector. Beyond their industrial significance, *S. cerevisiae* stands as a model organism in microbial physiology and genetics research. The study of its intricate biological processes provides invaluable insights into broader aspects of microbiology, offering a foundation for advancements in both biotechnological applications and our fundamental understanding of cellular mechanisms. Thus, these yeast strains, initially harnessed for winemaking, emerge as key players in diverse fields, illustrating the far-reaching impact of their biological contributions. (Zhang et al., 2021; Qi et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2019)

g. Pharmacological Investigations of Wine

Beyond its role as a libation, wine harbors compounds, like tartaric acid, that extend into pharmaceutical realms. Tartaric acid's chelating properties make it a subject of exploration for potential pharmaceutical applications, particularly as a stabilizer in drug formulations. This multifaceted compound, derived from grapes and intrinsic to wine, showcases its utility beyond the realms of oenology. The investigation into such compounds elucidates the diverse applications of wine-derived elements, hinting at a future where elements from the vineyard may contribute to advancements in pharmaceutical sciences and drug development, showcasing the intricate interplay between nature's bounty and scientific innovation. (Dolinsky et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2018)

h. Environmental Consideration of Wine Production

Wine production generates residues, such as grape pomace and red beetweed waste, which are increasingly harnessed for environmentally sustainable practices. These by-products find purpose in composting, enriching soil fertility and minimizing waste. Additionally, they contribute to the generation of bioenergy, aligning with eco-friendly initiatives. This dual approach, composting for agricultural benefit and bioenergy for renewable resources, showcases the

progressive and responsible utilization of winemaking by-products. Beyond the vineyard, this paradigm reflects an evolving commitment within the wine industry to foster sustainability and minimize environmental impact, transforming waste into valuable resources in a harmonious dance with nature. (Fernandes et al., 2020; Gattinger et al., 2019; Sala et al., 2019)

Scientific applications illuminate the expansive roles of wine across culinary, biomedical, analytical, cultural, agricultural, industrial, pharmacological, and environmental spheres. From enhancing flavors in cuisine to contributing to biomedical research, wine emerges as a multifaceted entity, bridging scientific disciplines and cultural practices in a tapestry of versatile applications.

3.2. Results by biblic exploration

a. In the Old Testament

Within the rich fabric of Old Testament festivities, the call for the children of Israel to engage in the consumption of wine is a subtle yet profound element, threading through the tapestry with symbolic weight, communal rejoicing, and theological intricacy. The biblical narrative, adorned with layers of allegory, unveils deliberate choices of incorporating wine in diverse celebratory moments. In doing so, it unravels deep truths concerning the essence of covenant, the expression of joy, and the intricate dynamics of the relationship between the divine and humanity. The inclusion of wine becomes not just a festive practice but a nuanced revelation of profound spiritual insights.

Central to the Old Testament festivities is the concept of covenant—a sacred pact between God and His chosen people. The communal sharing of wine becomes a symbolic expression of this covenantal bond. In the ancient Near East, the act of sharing a meal, accompanied by the consumption of wine, symbolized a mutual commitment and a bond of trust. In the context of Israel's festivals, the partaking of wine underscored the covenantal relationship between God and His people. It signified a shared participation in the blessings of the covenant, emphasizing unity and communal identity.

The festivals in the Old Testament, such as Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, feature the libation of wine as an integral element. In the Passover celebration, wine symbolizes both the joy of deliverance from bondage and the solemnity of the sacrificial lamb's blood, which marked the doorposts of the Israelite homes (Exodus 12:7, 13). The dual nature of wine as a symbol of joy and a reminder of sacrifice mirrors the complexity of the Israelites' journey—a journey marked by both liberation and obedience.

Furthermore, the biblical festivities often incorporated the theme of rejoicing and gratitude. Deuteronomy 14:26 encourages the Israelites to use a tithe of their produce to "buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice." This emphasis on rejoicing and feasting, which includes the consumption of wine, reflects the biblical understanding of celebration as an integral aspect of worship.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, there is a poignant acknowledgment of the fleeting nature of life and the enjoyment of God's gifts, including wine. Ecclesiastes 3:13 states, "That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God." Here, wine is portrayed as one of the gifts that bring satisfaction and joy, reinforcing the idea that in the divinely ordained festivities of the Old Testament, the consumption of wine is embedded within the larger context of recognizing and appreciating the goodness of God's provision.

Moreover, the Old Testament festivities and the exhortation to drink wine echo the biblical understanding of the Creator as the source of joy and abundance. Psalm 104:14-15 poetically captures this sentiment: "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts." Wine is portrayed as a gift from God that brings gladness to the human heart, fostering a sense of celebration and gratitude in the context of communal worship.

The exhortation for the children of Israel to drink wine in the Old Testament festivities unveils a multifaceted theological tapestry. It symbolizes covenantal unity, commemorates liberation and sacrifice, and embodies the joyous celebration of God's goodness. The inclusion of wine in these sacred observances reflects a profound understanding of the interplay between the physical and the spiritual, the communal and the divine, within the fabric of Israel's relationship with its Creator.

b. In the New Testament

Within the sacred narrative of biblical accounts, the Holy Communion is akin to a radiant filament intricately interwoven into the very fabric of divine revelation and human existence. Drawing from the teachings of Jesus Christ and resonating with the time-honored traditions of sacrificial rituals, this communion—referred to as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist—unfurls as a deeply significant sacrament. In doing so, it encapsulates the very core of Christian spirituality, fostering a communion between humanity and the divine that transcends the boundaries of time and tradition.

At the heart of the Holy Communion lies the climactic moment in the Upper Room, where Jesus, on the eve of His crucifixion, instituted this sacred rite. The Gospel accounts converge in recounting how Christ took bread, blessed it, broke it, and distributed it among His disciples, declaring, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Similarly, He took the cup, signifying the new covenant in His blood, urging His followers to partake, symbolizing the communion of his life with theirs (1 Corinthians 11:25).

The theological resonance of the Holy Communion reverberates through the biblical narrative, drawing from the rich tapestry of Old Testament symbolism. The backdrop of the Passover, with its unleavened bread and sacrificial lamb, provides a foundational tableau. Jesus, in instituting the Communion during the Passover feast, infuses this ancient ritual with new meaning, transforming it into a potent symbol of redemption and spiritual sustenance.

The multifaceted layers of meaning embedded in the Holy Communion unfold progressively in the New Testament writings. The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, illuminates the significance of this sacred act. He underscores the communal nature of the Eucharist, emphasizing not only the vertical dimension of communion with Christ but also the horizontal dimension of unity among believers. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Furthermore, the Communion is a profound act of remembrance—a sacred memorial that transcends mere recollection. In the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup, believers are invited to participate in the ongoing drama of salvation, to enter into the redemptive narrative, and to encounter the living Christ. The term "anamnesis," often used in

theological discourse, captures this concept of active remembrance—a remembrance that is not a passive recall but a dynamic participation in the salvific events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

The Holy Communion serves as a transformative encounter, symbolizing the spiritual nourishment derived from union with Christ. The bread and wine, consecrated and received with reverence, become conduits of grace, tangible symbols of Christ's presence in the midst of the worshipping community. In consuming the elements, believers partake in a mysterious communion that transcends the material realm, nourishing the soul and fostering spiritual growth.

The Communion is also an anticipation of eschatological fulfillment. In proclaiming, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26), Paul alludes to the forward-looking dimension of this sacred observance. It is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, a glimpse into the consummation of God's redemptive plan when believers will be in unbroken communion with the Triune God for eternity.

The Holy Communion, as depicted in the Bible, is a sacramental masterpiece—a divine symphony that harmonizes Old Testament foreshadowing with the New Testament revelation. It is a sacred act of remembrance, unity, nourishment, and anticipation, encapsulating the essence of Christian faith. As believers gather around the communion table, they participate in a profound mystery—a communion that transcends time and space, uniting them with the living Christ and with one another in the tapestry of divine love.

3.3. Discussion

a. The Meaning of the Red Color

The sacred chalice at Holy Communion reveals red wine's profound symbolism, weaving a theological tapestry beyond aesthetics. The rich crimson hue inspires theologians to explore its layers of meaning, connecting biblical narratives to the communal experience of the Eucharist, transcending mere visual appeal in a narrative woven with theological significance.

In the Christian theological imagination, the red color of wine resonates deeply with the biblical narrative, tracing its roots to the very institution of the Holy Communion by Christ Himself. As Jesus gathered with His disciples in the Upper Room during the Last Supper, the act of taking the cup and declaring it to be His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins ushered in a profound symbolism. While the Gospel accounts do not specify the color of the wine, the crimson imagery aligns with the traditional understanding of the gravity and richness of Christ's sacrificial act.

The redness of wine stands as a visual testimony to the solemnity of Christ's redemptive mission. Within the theological framework, it serves as a tangible reminder of the shedding of blood—an act that lies at the core of Christian soteriology. This hue, reminiscent of the blood that flowed from the wounds of the crucified Christ, becomes a poignant symbol of atonement, redemption, and the establishment of the new covenant.

Moreover, the red color of wine carries echoes of the Old Testament sacrificial system, where the shedding of blood was intricately tied to the remission of sins. The Passover, a precursor to the Eucharist, involved the application of lamb's blood on the doorposts as a sign of protection—a red symbol of divine deliverance. In this continuity, the red wine in the

Communion cup becomes a connective thread, weaving together the Old and New Testaments, signifying the fulfillment of prophetic promises in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Within the sacramental act of the Holy Communion, the redness of wine extends its symbolism into the experiential realm of the worshiping community. As believers partake in the shared cup, they enter into a communal act that transcends individual piety. The shared experience of sipping from the crimson chalice fosters a sense of unity—a collective participation in the mystery of Christ's sacrifice and the shared inheritance of the new covenant.

Furthermore, the red wine, as a symbol of Christ's blood, signifies not only the solemnity of atonement but also the vitality of new life. In the act of communion, believers do not merely remember a historical event but actively participate in the ongoing narrative of redemption. The redness becomes a dynamic symbol, not of death alone, but of life emerging from sacrifice—a transformative journey from sin to redemption, darkness to light.

The meaning of the red color of wine in the Holy Communion transcends its visual allure. It serves as a potent symbol of Christ's sacrificial love, the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, and the communal participation in the redemptive narrative. As the crimson elixir is shared among the faithful, it invites them to contemplate the profound mystery of Christ's atoning work and to embrace the transformative power of the new covenant—the covenant eternally sealed in the sacred and vivid redness of the Communion cup.

b. Opinions of some theologians

Protestant theologians express varied perspectives on Holy Communion, reflecting the diverse doctrinal traditions within Protestantism. Some view it symbolically, emphasizing the Lord's Supper as a memorial act, commemorating Christ's sacrifice. Others, within the Reformed tradition, emphasize the real spiritual presence of Christ in the elements. In contrast, Zwinglian traditions emphasize a purely symbolic representation. Lutheran theologians uphold the concept of consubstantiation, positing Christ's presence alongside the elements. Despite these differences, a common thread underscores the significance of communion as a sacred practice, fostering spiritual unity and communion with the divine among Protestant believers.

John Calvin: Calvin, a key figure in Reformed theology, espoused the notion of the Lord's Supper as a spiritually transformative event. While emphasizing Christ's real presence, he underscored the significance of faith, arguing that believers spiritually commune with Christ through the sacrament.

Martin Luther: Luther, a pivotal figure in the Protestant Reformation, advocated for consubstantiation—believing in Christ's simultaneous presence with the elements. For Luther, communion was a means of divine grace, fostering a profound encounter with Christ.

Ulrich Zwingli: Zwingli, a Swiss Reformer, held a symbolic view of the Eucharist. He regarded communion as a memorial act, rejecting the notion of Christ's literal presence. For Zwingli, the focus lay in remembering Christ's sacrifice.

John Wesley: Wesley, a founder of Methodism, embraced a nuanced view, affirming the real presence of Christ's spiritual influence. He emphasized communion as a means of grace, facilitating believers' growth in holiness and love.

Karl Barth: Barth, a 20th-century theologian, emphasized the dynamic encounter with the living Christ in communion. He saw the sacrament as a moment of divine revelation, where believers experience God's grace and respond in faith.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Bonhoeffer, a theologian in the mid-20th century, highlighted the communal aspect of the Lord's Supper. He saw it as a tangible expression of Christian fellowship, fostering unity among believers in the body of Christ.

These authors may not explicitly use the grape or wine metaphor, but their writings often touch upon the broader themes of spiritual development, maturation, and the transformative journey of the human spirit. Exploring their works can provide additional perspectives on the intricate relationship between the symbolic elements of life and the spiritual path.

c. In the Old Testament

The Bible does mention wine, and its references can be found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Here are some Bible verses that discuss wine:

Genesis 14:18: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)"

Genesis 27:28: "May God give you heaven's dew and earth's richness— an abundance of grain and new wine."

Exodus 29:40: "With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering." Deuteronomy 14:26: "Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice."

Psalms 104:14-15: "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts."

Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." Ecclesiastes 3:13: "That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God."

Amos 9:14: "I will bring my exiled people Israel back from captivity. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit."

d. In the New Testament

Matthew 26:27-29: "Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'"

It's important to note that while the Bible does discuss wine, it also provides guidelines on its consumption and warns against excessive drinking and drunkenness (e.g., Proverbs 20:1, Ephesians 5:18). Interpretations of these verses can vary, and different denominations may have different perspectives on the use of alcohol.

In contemplating the divine intention behind the incorporation of wine into the human experience, one finds oneself immersed in a complex tapestry woven with theological threads, each strand resonating with profound significance. The biblical narrative, replete with allegory and symbolism, provides a nuanced perspective on the role of wine in the human journey, inviting us to explore the depths of divine purpose within its consumption.

At the genesis of creation, the divine act of endowing humankind with the sensory capacity to perceive and appreciate the multifaceted dimensions of existence lays the foundation for the role of wine. In the symphony of creation, where the choirs of taste, aroma, and color harmonize, wine emerges as a libation of delight, a testament to the Creator's benevolence. The grape, transformed through the alchemy of fermentation, becomes a metaphorical chalice, inviting humanity to partake in the divine artistry embedded within the fruit of the vine.

Biblical references to wine are not mere happenstance; rather, they unfold as chapters in a divine narrative aimed at fostering communion between the transcendent and the immanent. Wine, as a recurring motif in sacred texts, assumes diverse roles—sometimes a symbol of joy (Psalm 104:14-15), at other times a sacramental conduit (Matthew 26:27-29). In the sacred tapestry, the nuances of God's objectives in the consumption of wine become discernible.

In the scriptural tableau, wine often serves as a medium for the expression of gratitude and worship. The act of libation, witnessed in the rituals of antiquity and echoed in the Eucharistic tradition, underscores a sacred dialogue between the earthly and the divine. The pouring of wine becomes a sacramental gesture, a tangible acknowledgment of the abundance bestowed by the Creator, and a channel through which humanity reciprocates in thanksgiving.

Moreover, the fermenting grape, undergoing transformation and maturation, reflects the sanctifying process embedded in the human journey. It mirrors the refinement of character, the maturing of the soul, as it transitions from the sweetness of must to the richness of a well-aged wine. Thus, the consumption of wine becomes emblematic of the transformative journey, wherein the human spirit evolves, deepening in wisdom and acquiring the nuanced flavors of virtue.

Yet, the theological exploration of wine's purpose necessitates a tempered reflection on the potential pitfalls inherent in its misuse. The biblical admonitions against drunkenness (Proverbs 20:1, Ephesians 5:18) serve as cautionary signposts, reminding humanity of the delicate equilibrium required in the consumption of this divine elixir. The inebriating effects of excessive indulgence stand as a stark contrast to the intended moderation, serving as a cautionary parable against the distortion of divine gifts.

The theological contemplation of God's objectives in making man consume wine unfurls a canvas where divine artistry and human experience converge. Through the biblical lens, wine emerges not merely as a libation of pleasure but as a sacramental tapestry woven with threads of gratitude, transformation, and caution. In the delicate sipping of this earthly ambrosia, humanity is beckoned to partake in a sacred communion—a communion that

transcends the boundaries of time and space, inviting the human spirit to taste the eternal in the ephemeral.

In the sacred ritual of Holy Communion, the utilization of a modest amount of red wine bears profound theological significance. This practice traces its roots to the biblical narrative where Jesus, during the Last Supper, employed wine as a symbolic representation of His blood. The deliberate use of a small quantity is not a limitation but a theological emphasis, underscoring the symbolic essence of the sacrament. Each sip becomes a potent reminder of Christ's sacrificial act, allowing believers to partake in a meaningful, albeit symbolic, communion with His redemptive work. This intentional moderation heightens the sacrament's solemnity, emphasizing quality over quantity in the theological expression of the Eucharist.

e. Opinion of Evangelical Theologians

Contemporary theologians within evangelical circles have delved into the theological nuances surrounding the Holy Communion, exploring the significance of the wine as a central element in this sacred sacrament. These theologians bring a vibrant and diverse array of perspectives, emphasizing the spiritual depth, communal nature, and transformative power of the Eucharistic celebration within the evangelical tradition.

John Piper: As a prominent figure in the Reformed tradition, John Piper has provided theological insights into the Holy Communion, including the role of wine. In his writings, Piper underscores the sacrament as a means of grace, viewing the wine as a tangible reminder of Christ's sacrificial death and a symbol of the new covenant. He emphasizes the solemn joy of partaking in the Lord's Supper, where believers commune with Christ and one another through the shared cup.

D.A. Carson: A respected evangelical theologian, D.A. Carson has contributed to theological discussions surrounding the Eucharist. Carson's reflections on the wine emphasize its connection to the Passover meal and the biblical narrative of redemption. In his work, he explores the rich symbolism of the wine, highlighting its role in conveying the spiritual truths of Christ's bloodshed for the forgiveness of sins.

J.J. Packer: The late J.I. Packer, known for his influential contributions to Reformed theology, has addressed the Holy Communion within the evangelical framework. Packer's writings often stress the importance of the Eucharist as a means of grace and a profound encounter with the living Christ. In discussing the wine, he emphasizes its role in symbolizing the lifeblood of Christ and the covenantal relationship between God and His people.

R.C. Sproul: R.C. Sproul, a theologian and founder of Ligonier Ministries, has written extensively on the doctrines of grace within Reformed theology. His works on the Holy Communion delve into the theological significance of the wine, emphasizing its representation of the blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins. Sproul's writings often stress the solemnity and reverence with which believers should approach the Lord's Table.

Wayne Grudem: Wayne Grudem, a systematic theologian within the evangelical tradition, has explored the theological foundations of the Eucharist. In his comprehensive work "Systematic Theology," Grudem addresses the Lord's Supper, including the symbolism of the wine. He discusses the significance of the cup in conveying the essence of the new covenant, where believers participate in the benefits of Christ's redemptive work.

Alister McGrath: While representing a more broadly evangelical perspective, Alister McGrath, a theologian and scientist, has engaged with the Eucharist in his writings. McGrath's reflections on the wine focus on the transformative nature of the sacrament, viewing it as a communal act that deepens believers' understanding of their identity in Christ. He emphasizes the symbolism of the wine in fostering a sense of unity and shared participation in Christ's redemptive work.

These evangelical theologians, rooted in the Reformed and broader evangelical traditions, offer profound insights into the theological understanding of the wine within the Holy Communion. Their writings reflect a commitment to the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church, highlighting the symbolic richness and spiritual depth encapsulated in the shared cup. Through their contributions, these theologians invite believers to engage thoughtfully with the sacred act of communion, finding spiritual nourishment and unity in the profound symbolism of the wine.

f. Is red wine exclusively suitable for holy communion?

In the sacred ritual of the Holy Communion, the question of whether one should exclusively use red wine is not merely a matter of oenological preference but extends into the realms of symbolism, tradition, and theological interpretation. The choice of red wine as the medium for representing the blood of Christ in the Eucharist has historical and symbolic significance within various Christian traditions, reflecting a tapestry of theological convictions and interpretative lenses.

The use of red wine traces its roots back to the symbolism embedded in the biblical narrative itself. In the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, where Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the reference to wine as a representation of His blood does not specify its color. However, red wine, often associated with richness and depth, aligns with the traditional understanding of the sacrament. The deep hue of red wine symbolically echoes the profound nature of Christ's sacrificial bloodshed, emphasizing the gravity of the atonement.

The choice of red wine in the Eucharist also finds resonance in the historical practices of the early Christian Church. From the patristic era onward, the use of red wine became entrenched in liturgical tradition. Early Church Fathers, such as St. Augustine, made reference to red wine in the celebration of the Eucharist, further solidifying its association with the blood of Christ.

The theological underpinnings of using red wine in the Holy Communion center around its symbolic resonance with the biblical narrative and the profound theological themes of redemption and atonement. The deep color serves as a visual reminder of the seriousness of Christ's sacrifice and the covenantal significance of His blood in the establishment of the new covenant.

However, it's crucial to recognize that the choice of red wine is not universally mandated across all Christian denominations. Some traditions, especially those with a more pragmatic or inclusive approach, permit the use of white or even non-alcoholic alternatives in the celebration of the Eucharist. Theological perspectives on this matter can vary, reflecting the diversity within the broader Christian community.

In the tapestry of theological interpretation, there are those who argue that the emphasis should not be placed solely on the color of the wine but on the underlying theological truth it

signifies. The essence of the Eucharist lies not in the specific shade of the wine but in the spiritual reality it represents—the remembrance and proclamation of Christ's sacrificial death and the participation in the benefits of the new covenant.

Ultimately, the question of whether one should exclusively drink red wine in the Holy Communion invites a thoughtful engagement with both tradition and theological interpretation. While red wine holds a longstanding and symbolic place within many Christian traditions, the broader theological significance of the Eucharist transcends the color of the wine. It beckons believers to partake in a profound mystery, where the elements, regardless of their hue, become conduits of grace, inviting the worshipping community to enter into the sacred narrative of redemption and communion with the divine.

g. Other beverage else for Holy Communion

In contemplating the sacramental aspects of libations, particularly within the context of religious rituals and theological discourse, it is imperative to recognize that the significance transcends the confines of wine alone. While wine holds a revered place in many religious traditions for its symbolism of blood and covenant, a broader perspective unveils a rich tapestry of elements that contribute to the sacred communion experience.

Theology underscores the profound connection between the material and the divine, acknowledging the potential for spiritual elevation through various means. Beyond the grape, other substances, such as water and bread, are equally emblematic in religious symbolism. Water, often associated with purification and rebirth, becomes a conduit for spiritual cleansing and renewal in many faith traditions. Similarly, bread, representing sustenance and unity, takes its place alongside wine in the sacred act of communion, embodying the shared nourishment of a spiritual journey.

Moreover, the symbolic potency of elements extends to diverse cultural contexts, where unique substances hold sacred significance. From the ritualistic use of herbs to the ceremonial consumption of grains, the theological landscape encompasses a rich diversity of materials that serve as conduits for spiritual connection and transcendence.

In essence, the theological perspective invites a holistic understanding of sacraments, recognizing that the sacred experience is not confined to a singular element. The communion table becomes a mosaic, weaving together the symbolic threads of various substances, each contributing to the depth and richness of the spiritual encounter. Theology, in its nuanced exploration of the divine, embraces a multifaceted approach that transcends exclusivity, acknowledging the manifold ways in which the sacred can be expressed and encountered.

In the sacred ritual of communion, the symbolic essence lies not solely in the medium of wine but in the profound spiritual significance it represents. Theological flexibility allows for the substitution of wine with water or fruit juice, emphasizing the inclusivity of this sacred sacrament. Water, a symbol of purity and life, and fruit juice, a representation of the Earth's bounty, both hold the potential to convey the spiritual essence of communion. In transcending the literal substance, the theological focus remains on the divine communion, fostering a deeper understanding of unity and the shared spiritual journey among believers.

In this theological reflection, the invitation is extended to embrace a broader perspective that encompasses the sacred potential inherent in a spectrum of elements. The communion experience becomes a symphony, where wine harmonizes with other symbolic substances,

collectively creating a sacred tapestry that resonates with the diverse spiritual sensibilities of the faithful. As theologians engage in the discourse surrounding sacraments, the recognition of this expansive perspective fosters a more inclusive understanding of the divine encounter, inviting believers to explore the sacred within the diverse elements that grace the ritualistic table.

If incorporating wine into Holy Communion necessitates the availability of low-alcohol options, such as those with less than 0.5 vol %, achieved through osmotic distillation (Shrikhande, 2000; Diban et al., 2008; Varavuth et al., 2009), this process may result in the depletion of phenolic components in fruit wines, including vanillic acid, caffeic acid, and p-coumaric acid, potentially compromising sensory and nutritional qualities (Bartolome, Pena-Neira, & Gomez-Cordoves, 2000). Addressing this challenge, a burgeoning organic approach seeks to attain reduced alcohol content while preserving beverage integrity (Li et al., 2023; Liguori et al., 2013).

h. A Holy Communion to someone in the final moments of life

The administration of the Holy Communion to someone on the threshold of death, commonly known as Viaticum in Christian tradition, is a profound expression of the Church's theological understanding of life, death, and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist. Rooted in centuries of theological reflection and scriptural foundations, this practice holds deep significance, offering spiritual sustenance and a profound encounter with the divine to the dying individual. (Rahner, 1982; Bonhoeffer, 1954;

Firstly, the sacrament of Holy Communion is imbued with the theological concept of the Real Presence—the belief that, in the consecrated elements of bread and wine, the actual body and blood of Christ are spiritually and mysteriously present. As one approaches the end of earthly life, the reception of the Eucharist becomes a sacramental participation in the very life of Christ, symbolizing a profound union with the crucified and resurrected Savior.

Secondly, the act of providing Holy Communion to the dying person aligns with the Christian understanding of death as a transition rather than a finality. In the Eucharist, believers express their confidence in the promise of eternal life through Christ's resurrection. Offering the sacrament to the dying underscores the Church's belief in the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice, extending beyond the temporal boundaries of life and death.

Moreover, the reception of the Holy Communion at the end of life is intimately connected to the broader narrative of redemption and forgiveness. The sacrament emphasizes the assurance of God's mercy and the forgiveness of sins, providing comfort and solace to the departing soul. It is a symbolic journey from this life to the next, with the Eucharist serving as a spiritual guide, a source of strength, and a testament to the enduring presence of Christ in the face of mortality.

In essence, providing Holy Communion to someone at the threshold of death is a sacramental gesture that encapsulates the theological richness of Christian beliefs. It represents a communion with the divine, an affirmation of the hope of resurrection, and a tangible expression of God's grace and mercy in the face of mortality. The sacrament becomes a sacred bridge, connecting the believer to the eternal reality of Christ's redemptive work and offering spiritual comfort as one transition from this life to the next.

IV. Conclusion

In the sacred ritual of the Holy Communion, the question of whether one should exclusively use red wine is not merely a matter of oenological preference but extends into the realms of symbolism, tradition, and theological interpretation. The choice of red wine as the medium for representing the blood of Christ in the Eucharist has historical and symbolic significance within various Christian traditions, reflecting a tapestry of theological convictions and interpretative lenses.

The use of red wine traces its roots back to the symbolism embedded in the biblical narrative itself. In the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, where Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the reference to wine as a representation of His blood does not specify its color. However, red wine, often associated with richness and depth, aligns with the traditional understanding of the sacrament. The deep hue of red wine symbolically echoes the profound nature of Christ's sacrificial bloodshed, emphasizing the gravity of the atonement.

The choice of red wine in the Eucharist also finds resonance in the historical practices of the early Christian Church. From the patristic era onward, the use of red wine became entrenched in liturgical tradition. Early Church Fathers, such as St. Augustine, made reference to red wine in the celebration of the Eucharist, further solidifying its association with the blood of Christ.

The theological underpinnings of using red wine in the Holy Communion center around its symbolic resonance with the biblical narrative and the profound theological themes of redemption and atonement. The deep color serves as a visual reminder of the seriousness of Christ's sacrifice and the covenantal significance of His blood in the establishment of the new covenant.

However, it's crucial to recognize that the choice of red wine is not universally mandated across all Christian denominations. Some traditions, especially those with a more pragmatic or inclusive approach, permit the use of white or even non-alcoholic alternatives in the celebration of the Eucharist. Theological perspectives on this matter can vary, reflecting the diversity within the broader Christian community.

Within the intricate realm of theological interpretation, some contend that the focal point should extend beyond the mere hue of the wine, directing attention instead to the profound theological truths it symbolizes. The crux of the Eucharist does not solely reside in the particular coloration of the wine but, rather, in the spiritual verity it encapsulates—an act of remembrance and proclamation of Christ's sacrificial death and an active participation in the transformative blessings of the new covenant. The emphasis thus shifts from the external attributes to the spiritual depth, enriching the significance of the sacred ritual.

Ultimately, the question of whether one should exclusively drink red wine in the Holy Communion invites a thoughtful engagement with both tradition and theological interpretation. While red wine holds a longstanding and symbolic place within many Christian traditions, the broader theological significance of the Eucharist transcends the color of the wine. It beckons believers to partake in a profound mystery, where the elements, regardless of their hue, become conduits of grace, inviting the worshipping community to enter into the sacred narrative of redemption and communion with the divine.

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