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Taken from *The Soul of Wine* by Gisela H. Kreglinger.

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REDISCOVERING WINE

All the great theologians and church reformers wrote about and celebrated wine as a gift from God. Up until the nineteenth century all Christian traditions served wine in the Lord's Supper. And yet in today's Christian culture, there is little witness to this rich interweaving of wine, feasting, and redemptive living. Wine just isn't talked about. I believe this has created a void in our culture, and we

"The earth also shall yield
its fruit ten-thousandfold
and on each vine there
shall be a thousand
branches, and each branch
shall produce a thousand
clusters, and each cluster
produce a thousand grapes,
and each grape produce a
cor of wine. And those who
have hungered shall rejoice:
more over, also, they shall
behold marvels every day."

2 BARUCH 29:5-6 (ABOUT
THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM)

have given over to the secular world the task of determining the meaning of wine for us. I think that's quite tragic. Why?

Many can't see and don't experience those moments of grace when a lovely and delectable wine softens the hard places within and opens us up to those around us. That's particularly heart-wrenching because at no other time in history have we had such easy access to great and wonderful wines from around the world right at our local wine stores.

North Americans in particular are rediscovering wine, and it is quickly becoming a powerful cultural force in our midst. The aftermath of the Prohibition could only last so long, and on a broad scale

people are discovering that wine is a fantastic drink. Wineries are popping up all over the place. Wine shops and wine bars have added color and sophistication to downtown areas and residential neighborhoods, and even at airports fast-food chains give way to a more demanding and liberated clientele that has become increasingly dissatisfied with junk food. It's an exciting development, but I feel there is something missing, something important.

THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY WINE TALK

With the emergence of a new and young wine culture has come a way of talking about wine I find both intriguing and enlightening, but also unsettling and restrictive. Over the last fifty years or so a new guild of wine writers, wine educators, and sommeliers has emerged who take their work seriously. You can learn much from them. However, they have emerged out of a highly competitive consumer culture, and they perpetuate ways of talking about wine that quickly pull us into a competitive, elitist, and perhaps exclusive way of talking about wine. It can easily make us feel inadequate, ignorant, and overwhelmed. That's not fun, and that's not how it was meant to be. It goes against the grain of what love and grace are all about and what gifts are for.

When talk about wine becomes a barrier for you to be able to enter the world of wine and explore wine on your own terms and enjoy it, then something important has gotten lost. The door is shut for many who would otherwise be quite interested in exploring wine. Ultimately, no one can capture the beauty of a well-crafted wine in language. Words help for sure, but they can only hint at the beauty

and complexity we experience in a well-crafted wine. Wines at their best make us marvel and instill in us a sense of awe for what this earth is capable of bringing forth. They lift us out of the mundane to a place of wonder and give us a glimpse into the very heart of what it means to be alive in this world. There is mystery in wine.

I am concerned that many of you, perhaps new to the world of wine, feel so intimidated and overwhelmed by it all that you think it's not for you. You might walk into a supermarket or a wine shop, or look at the long wine list in a fancy restaurant with names that you will never be able to pronounce, and think it's best left to the experts and wine enthusiasts. *It's not for me.* But God gave wine to make glad the hearts of humanity, and to miss out on this great gift and the joy and conviviality it can bring is a great loss.

It is freeing when you can look back in history and learn how different cultures and writers have understood wine. It opens up a vision that liberates you to consider a wider world and embrace values that are perhaps more welcoming and inclusive. When Benedictine nuns first began planting vines along the river Main in our region of Germany, they had a particular way of understanding wine. They ingested the Bible and the Rule of St. Benedict daily, and this perspective shaped their vision and values. They saw wine as a gift from God and crafted it for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for their own nourishment, and to share it with those around them. Both the Bible and the Rule of St. Benedict stress the importance of hospitality and taking care of the sick, poor, and vulnerable of society. To share the wine they crafted with guests, pilgrims, the sick, and the poor was fundamental to their vision of the Christian life.

Even fourteen hundred years later, Christians still uphold those beliefs and values, and yet when it comes to wine, we've allowed the secular world to define what wine is for. Wine and wine talk has become a way to differentiate yourself from others and help you to secure a sense of identity built on your education, knowledge, and financial success. It has tendencies to be competitive, exclusive, and elitist. I think it's time to reclaim wine as a gift from God and re-define its meaning on our own terms, away from the pressures of the highly competitive consumer societies that seem to haunt us wherever we go.

ENJOYING WINE AS A GIFT FROM GOD

While wine has long been an integral part of European culture, the ordinary wine drinker does not know much about wine. Traditionally, they only drank their local wines and didn't know much about those particular local wines either. It was part of their culture just like their local cheese and bread. And they enjoyed the wine without the pressure to become a sophisticated wine consumer. That's still the case with most wine drinkers where I come from in Franconia, where wine has been cultivated since the Romans came. It was and is just part of life and part of *joie de vivre*—the enjoyment of life. These innocent times are gone.

We have to learn to maneuver our way around this ever-changing and complex world of wine where the wine-marketing experts fiercely compete for our attention and want to submit us to their talk about wine.

I have written *The Soul of Wine* to help you rediscover wine as a spiritual and cultural gift. We must reclaim wine as a gift from God

and allow it to bring joy and conviviality into our midst. Wine was never meant just for a small and elite group of well-to-do people but is a gift from God to us all. We can and should learn together how wine can help us reconnect with God, one another, and creation. Wine can reenchant the world for us and help us fall in love with it all over again. There is a good reason why Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine. Few created things can hint at the glory of the heavenly wedding banquet like a choice wine can.

I would like to introduce you to the world of wine sip by sip, help you shed any sense of intimidation that you might have, and help you embrace this world with a sense of curiosity and wonder. I want you to come alongside me and let me be your guide. Let's have some fun while we explore this together and keep those at bay who seek to intimidate us by their sometimes outlandish and elitist wine talk. Let the convivial embrace begin.

This book is about rediscovering the gift of wine for what it was meant to be and do: reveal glimpses of God's incredible love, generosity, and benevolence toward us. We have let this gift fall by the wayside, and the secular world now defines the meaning of wine for us. It eclipses the superabundant generosity of God, who always desires to give us more than we need, even wine. We are more than survivors in this world; our lives were never meant to be just about water and bread but also about wine and wild-caught fish.

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